

**Building a Better Harrow Residents Panel**  
**Meeting 19, 9 April 2019 at The Chocolate Room, 324 Station Road**

**Attendance**

Officers: Jan Rowley, Daniel Lester, and Leanne Cooper

Councillors Keith Ferry and Sue Anderson

Panel members: Raj Kumar (facilitator / chair), Louise Baxter, Mihir Benison, Joanna Bowyer and Magali Peyrefitte.

Apologies: Consolata Ndungu, Tanvi Vyas, Manjul Shah and Vishaal Shah.

**Items**

Introductions - Raj welcomed the attendees.

Notes of Previous Meeting – Notes were not currently available online, but it was confirmed that these would be available from 10 April 2019.

Town Centre Update: How Regeneration is changing Harrow and the potential for the future  
– Lou Baxter

- Town centre has benefitted from private investment previously and further investment will come from ongoing developments and regeneration in the town.
- Footfall remains steady. Harrow has the 5<sup>th</sup> best lowest vacancy rate in the South East and there has been a 4.8% growth in the night time economy.
- The Harrow BID recently received the best ballot result in the UK, demonstrating the commitment and ambition for the centre for the next 5 years.
- While generally a lot of positive progress, it is essential to get some basics right for giving the town a “wow” factor. The town centre could be enhanced through some uniformity, eye-catching features – flags, quality stalls, and also some distinctive landmarks (for example consider ARC House and the pop-up restaurant area).
  - Suggestions of current issues affecting the town centre were noted as:
    - The bus station environment, which does not present a good first impression including the structure itself, traffic and safety.
    - The centre is inward looking – particularly at Greenhill Way and St Anns and greater activity to bring people in and create interest would be helpful.
    - The centre can feel like a group of disparate areas rather than a cohesive centre, and greater uniformity could help
    - The town centre closes early, limiting activity and people that could make use of the shops and services available.
    - Need a reason to come to Harrow – something that sets it apart from other areas that people might otherwise choose to go to. A farmer’s market/local market for small businesses and independent crafts at the Greenhill Way car park was suggested as a possible positive feature for the area.

- Note that there is an opportunity through the Creative Places People fund. The BID will be a hub leader for the town centre and if the funding bid is successful in June, it can potentially provide a resource to facilitate and promote the cultural offer in the town.
- Further to the suggested farmer's market/local market at Greenhill Way, Cllr Ferry noted that this could be arranged for Sundays in future.

#### Questions

- The Panel highlighted difficulties in engaging effectively with some Council teams, particularly the Commissioning and Commercial Services team and an apparent lack of coordination across different departments. *Councillors present requested that they were sent details of proposals etc – their role allowed a more strategic oversight and being aware of ongoing issues enables them to help to move projects or ideas forward within the Council.*
- A list of divisional directors/portfolio holders was requested to identify the appropriate contacts for different service areas.

Action: Harrow BID to provide outline plan for the suggested market to cover when it would take place, how it would be organised, who will organise and manage it, examples of where it has been done previously to LB Harrow Estates team and Councillor Ferry.

Action: List of divisional directors/portfolio holders and organisational chart if available to be circulated to Panel members.

#### Arc House – Raj Kumar

- Noted that LB Harrow has a number of strategies and plans, including the Cultural Strategy and these identify Arc House as an important space for the arts, culture and performance.
- The space is not currently used and understood that LB Harrow are looking at commercial options.
- An overview report on the role of Arc House in the Council's strategies, and opportunities to ensure that it can remain a valuable resource for the local area was circulated.
- Future opportunities should not be missed, including identifying and securing development funding from TfL proposals at Harrow on the Hill - to support the use of Arc House (the cultural offer) and enhance Lowlands in line with the Council's wider strategies.
- The report had been provided to the Council in March. However, no response had been received for a month (until it was highlighted the subject would be discussed at this meeting) and the lack of communication was raised as a concern.
  - Importance of involving local councillors was reiterated to facilitate the cooperation needed to make the most of the opportunities.
- Acknowledged that the Council need to ensure that use of the space is viable. However, should the Creative Places People funding be confirmed, there will be a hub lead in place to take this forward.

- In the short term, the space should be opened up for at least one event/performance this summer to showcase what the space can offer.

#### Update from MIPIM – Jan Rowley and Councillor Keith Ferry

- Noted that MIPIM can have a poor reputation, but it has been important for the borough to have a presence.
- LB Harrow attendance was sponsored by developers active in Harrow and there were very clear objectives defined for the event to:
  - Identify whether the development industry is interested in the key sites in Harrow.
  - Showcase Building a Better Harrow and demonstrate how the town has grown and the investment in the area
  - Promote Harrow Building Control services
  - Support the wider London growth agenda.
- After a full programme of meetings, it was apparent that the development market is interested in Harrow, the key sites and are generally positive over the way that Harrow engage on the development process.
- There were suggestions that developers could pay more during the pre-application stage which will be explored.
- Noted that under the new London Plan, Harrow will need to deliver 1,400 homes a year and the Council will need partners to deliver this.
- As a consequence of the contacts made, a developer briefing has been arranged to provide an introduction to what has happened and the future opportunities in the borough to bring forward development with over 40 developers, both large scale and local developers invited.

#### Regeneration Programme – Jan Rowley

- Waxwell Lane and Haslam House are due to start work in the next 3 months. There are some financing issues with Vaughan Road which are being worked through.
- No decisions have yet been made on Poets' Corner, Peel Road and the Byron Quarter, but officers are working through these and will be going back to Councillors with a proposed approach.

#### Questions

- It was noted that sites are not going to happen overnight. Meanwhile uses have been talked about by the Panel previously and would be beneficial. *Providing meanwhile uses is a challenge for the Council as will need preparatory work with financial impact, and phasing will need to be carefully considered and managed. Also important to ensure that any uses complement existing businesses in Harrow.*
- Indication of phasing of development would be useful to help identify potentially appropriate meanwhile uses that could be sought. *Noted that phasing is not*

*necessarily straightforward and timescales not certain at present, but the latest information will be provided to the Panel.*

- There had not been any update for residents on the programme for some time and would be helpful to keep people informed that the proposals for key sites are still being considered. *Noted that no decisions have yet been made and need to go through Councillors before an update can be provided.*

Action: Details of previous Panel discussion on Meanwhile use to be circulated to JR for review.

#### Town Centre Update

- Noted that employment space has been lost from Harrow in the past and need to consider what will replace this. Despite the loss of office space and some businesses, there remain very high levels of employment and some employers are struggling to recruit.

Action: Mark Billington to be invited to future meeting to provide an update.

#### AOB

- Panel membership to be reviewed and DL to investigate new members – potential to recruit through future Harrow People edition and consider a possible interview with a current Panel member.
- Network Rail have indicated that they are to start works at Harrow and Wealdstone Station after Easter with £4m investment. However, no details of what this will entail and there has been no communication with LB Harrow up until the very last moment.
- MP advised that she is working on a project with the Grange Farm Steering Group to capture residents' experiences and stories, build their confidence up and hopefully empower the community - whilst the regeneration (wholesale demolition) of the estate is taking place.

Action: DL to investigate new Panel members.

#### Date of Next Meeting

- 7pm, Tuesday 18 June, Arc House
- Consider inviting local bands to experience the space
- Future agenda items to include:
  - Progress on regeneration schemes
  - Arc House
  - Phasing of sites and meanwhile uses
  - Progress on market in the Town Centre
  - Social and affordable housing and the mix being sought
  - A developer to speak to the Panel.