

MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP

2 FEBRUARY 2016

Present: Councillor R Martins (Chair)
Councillors K Collett, A Joynes and L Topping

Also present:

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)
Urban Design and Conservation Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Haley.

2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January were submitted and signed.

The Chair commented that this would be the final meeting of the Task Group. Future discussions would be undertaken using email.

He thanked members of the Task Group and officers for their time and contributions.

The Task Group's final report would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 3 March and then to Cabinet on 7 March.

4 SURVEY FEEDBACK

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer had tabled a late draft report on the findings of the survey for residents. The report would be subject to further editing and required some appendices to be added.

She reported that the link to the survey had been taken off the Council's website on 2 February. 139 responses had been received in total. Of these, 127 had been completed on-line, 8 at the drop-in session on 26 January and 4 during door-to-door canvassing.

Two spikes in the response rate were notable. The first had followed inclusion of the survey in the Mayor's fortnightly newsletter on 22 January. The second followed a boost to the survey's profile on Facebook on 29 January.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer observed it was important to understand that the respondents were self-selecting and therefore not necessarily representative of the wider views of residents living in Conservation Areas.

Despite these caveats, the survey findings were both constructive and encouraging. Residents appeared engaged in their local areas and had put forward constructive comments and suggestions.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the appendices, which would provide more detailed information on the comments and concerns of residents, would be circulated to members of the Task Group separately.

Task Group members expressed disappointment at the limited number of responses to the Councillor survey – 6 in total, of which 5 were members of the Task Group. It was agreed that this did not provide sufficient data to undertake any meaningful analysis.

Councillor Collett agreed to raise the Task Group's concerns about the lack of Councillor engagement at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5 TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer had tabled a sheet of draft recommendations drawn from the Task Group's discussions to date and feedback from the surveys.

These were reviewed and discussed by the Task Group. Approving the direction of the proposed recommendations, it was agreed to add more details to the current statements and circulate these to the Task Group for final approval.

During discussions on the proposed recommendations, the following points were raised:

- there should be an additional recommendation for the Council to be proactive with residents about the requirements for undertaking certain alterations to properties in conservation areas. This should use social media, which had proved an effective communication tool in the survey for residents;
- the final report should acknowledge the Task Group's understanding that there would be cost implications in some of the recommendations and it would be important to seek funding sources for any projects to enhance conservation areas;

- it would be helpful to include some information on Watford's conservation areas in the induction training for new members. This might involve producing a succinct factsheet with signposts to the Council's website for more detailed information.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.10 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm