

Visit to the London Borough of Waltham Forest

Friday 11th September 2009

Purpose of visit:

Visit to look at their hot food take away policy introduced by LB of Waltham Forest

Those involved:

Waltham Forest

Councillor Terry Wheeler – Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration

Gordon Glenday - Strategic Planning Manager

Bromsgrove

Councillor Steve Colella

Councillor David Pardoe

Phil Street

Rosemary Williams

1. Gordon Glenday made a presentation that included:
 - background and information about Waltham Forest;
 - their Sustainable Communities Strategy;
 - their evidence based approach to introducing a hot food take away policy; the reaction of the community and traders
 - the achievements to date
2. Waltham Forest is in North East London. It has a population of 222,000 and has a very diverse population. It is close to the 2012 Olympic site and is one of the five Olympic boroughs (Newham; Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Haringey). The Olympic legacy is perceived as an important dimension to its future development.
3. It boasts the longest street market in UK and despite its location it is a green borough and includes part of Lea Valley and contains Epping Forest.
4. The sustainable community strategy involved consultation with 2,500 residents and the issue of the hot food takeaways (HFT) featured in many responses. They are referred to locally as 'chicken shops'.
5. There was concern about their nutritional quality, their impact on diet, health, streetscape and poor quality shop fronts.
6. The policy has links to children's health, healthy lifestyles and areas of incidence of high crime levels.
7. There are a total of 256 hot food takeaways in the borough. Many located in clusters on the high street and there is an over concentration

of HFT in certain areas. Fast food takeaways make up 30% of outlets in specific areas.

8. There were also comments about associations with noise, anti-social behaviour and litter.
9. The Borough mapped HFT and their proximity to schools, parks, youth centres, play areas and parks.
10. They wanted to introduce a policy that prevented the development of HFT within 400 metres of places where children and young people gather i.e. schools etc.
11. The habit of using fast food takeaways is developed at an early age and evidence indicates that this informs dietary behaviour in future years. The policy aims to tackle that habit and reduce consumption of take away foods.
12. They set 11 broad tests which included:
 - Preventing concentration and clusters
 - Prevent location near schools and other focuses for children and young people
 - Close to residential property
13. They prepared a supplementary planning document (SPD) which received 89% support from those with whom they consulted.
14. Received significant support from residents, schools and health professionals.
15. The policy was introduced from April 2009.
16. LB Waltham Forest does not have a core strategy, but they introduced this as an interim planning policy. They consulted with Government Office London and they supported their proposals.
17. They also included consideration of existing HFT and set up a HFT corporate group that brought together environmental health; reps from LSP; health professionals and economic development and aimed to :
 - Improve the quality of food served
 - Make available a healthy choice
18. The policy was also aiming to address childhood obesity.
19. They see their town centre as an asset and want to encourage quality shopping, healthy businesses, vibrant and attractive daytime and evening economy.

20. They feel the policy will contribute towards improving the attractiveness, viability and marketing of the borough and smaller town centres.
21. The policy allows them to assert stronger controls over environmental management, through pro-active use of planning and enforcement powers particularly to tackle the proliferation of fast food outlets.
22. They carried out an equalities impact assessment on the HFT policy.
23. SPD placed restrictions on new HFT opening hours. They are not allowed to open at lunchtimes, they have to have a policy for picking up litter and they need to think about the nutritional content of their menus.
24. They have linked the policy to scores on the doors.
25. Seven applications have been presented since SPD and all have been refused. There have been no appeals so far.
26. The introduction of the policy has been accompanied by increased enforcement activity.
27. Increased focus on A5 uses for environmental health checks and 12 premises have been closed down.
28. The policy has been accompanied by greater inter-team activity and communication leading to a more efficient joined up working relationship.
29. Links have been formed with universities to tap into expert knowledge and best practice. Links in particular to London Metropolitan University – a name mentioned was that of Professor Jack Winkler who has been involved in nutritional issues and the issue of fast food takeaways
30. LB of Waltham Forest does not take the view that an empty shop filled by a fast food takeaway is better than an empty shop. The impact of the negative affect far outweighs the positives of having a tenant.
31. The SPD was linked to an existing policy and had popular local support.