

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 February 2013 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Suzannah Clarke (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, John Bowen, Julia Fletcher, Mark Ingleby, Sam Owolabi-Oluyole and Eva Stamirowski

APOLOGIES: Councillors Obajimi Adefiranye and Marion Nisbet

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Carl Handley, Councillor Jim Mallory, Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Lesley Brooks (Service Group Manager, Travel Demand Management), Mark Humphreys (Group Finance Manager, Customer Services), John Miller (Head of Planning), Lucy Morton (Principal Policy Officer), Ian Ransom (Transport Service Group Manager), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services), Nigel Tyrell (Head of Environment), Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) and Wendy Lloyd (Lee Green Working Group)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2012

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 11 December 2013 be accepted as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

None declared.

3. Response from Mayor and Cabinet on Climate Local

Resolved: to accept the response.

4. Response from Mayor and Cabinet on the preserving local pubs review

John Miller (Head of Planning) introduced the response. The key points to note were:

- Measures for the protection of pubs were being considered as part of the Council's proposed development management local plans.
- In December 2012, the Mayor had agreed to the local listing of 20 Lewisham pubs.
- The general use of article four directions for the protection of local pubs was now being considered.

In response to questions from the Committee, John Miller advised:

- The new policy being developed might be useful to other boroughs which were looking to develop best practice in this area.
- The information gathered for the evidence base study provided a good foundation from which to commission additional work.
- The timescale for the delivery of the changes in the report was approximately 18 months.

- Further updates would be brought back to the committee as required.

Resolved: to accept the response.

5. Parking

Ralph Wilkinson (Head of Public Services) introduced the *Parking Policy Review – Conclusions and Recommendations* report, the key points to note were:

- A decision on the parking enforcement contract was due to be made by Mayor and Cabinet on 10 April 2013, at the same meeting as the consideration of the parking policy review conclusions and recommendations report.
- Recommendations in the parking policy report were intended to achieve a fair balance between a range of competing factors. However, it was difficult to find balance in some areas because there was very little agreement on the issues raised.
- The report was split into three principle sections: a summary of issues; recommendations; detailed analysis in the appendices.

Controlled parking zones

- The process for determining the extent and the operating hours of controlled parking zones (CPZs) was a primary issue of concern raised by the consultation.
- People tended to only want a CPZ when they has a problem in their immediate vicinity. This led to a number of incongruous roads being included or excluded from CPZs. ‘Overspill’ problems had been created in some areas, where the implementation of a CPZ had merely pushed parking problems from one road to another.
- Officers were putting forward a set of key principles for the new parking policy; amongst these was the recommendation that CPZs should be implemented when 50% voted in favour, based on a minimum 10% turnout.
- Future proposals for CPZs would be developed around whole areas rather than individual streets (as had sometimes been the case in the past)
- There remained a series of difficult problems, on which there tended to be very little consensus. In particular, people did not tend to vote for a CPZ unless they had a specific parking issue.
- In future, officers would continue to balance local intelligence with professional intelligence to assess the issues arising in a specific area. The aim would be to include all areas in CPZ consultations where there was the potential for problems.
- CPZ consultation process would be formalised and consultation on new zones would follow a standardised approach. The aim would be to anticipate and deal with parking issues by engaging in timely and effective communication.
- The framework for implementing new CPZs would be flexible enough to allow for local variations.
- The Council had a responsibility to deal with issues created by new building and regeneration. Where professional opinion indicated that there would be a potential parking problem in the vicinity of a new development, solutions would be presented to Mayor and Cabinet in order to influence

development of CPZ without an actual vote. This would ensure timely pre-emptive action.

Charges

- Parking charges would remain at the new recommended levels (should they be accepted) until 2015/16 and be reviewed annually from then on.
- The report set out two options for resident parking permits. The first would be to retain the current flat-rate charge; and the second would be to split the cost of permits between first and subsequent cars owned by a household. A lower price would be paid for the first and a higher charge for the second. Cars falling into the A and B tax bands would be offered a concessionary rate regardless of which of the two options above were agreed.
- Determining the right approach to visitor parking was difficult but the Council was committed to finding a solution to the problem.
- There were financial risks involved in delivering the visitors parking permit system. Holders of parking permits would receive a number of vouchers included in the cost of their annual permit. Additional vouchers would be made available for elderly residents and recipients of council tax benefit. It was agreed that the visitors system should be cost neutral.
- It was recommended that carers permits be issued free of charge to residents who met the criteria and did not have another type of permit.

Business

- There was no clear response from businesses to the public survey. When asked about free short-stay bays, some respondents felt that the period of free parking should be extended to encourage shoppers to stay for longer, others felt that the short stay should remain in place to encourage the turn over of potential customers.
- Responses from business did not present a strong case for change, nonetheless, officers would consider consulting on changes to short stay parking places where there was a strong case for change.

Blue badges

- There were 7200 blue badge holders in Lewisham. Approaches to dealing with parking arrangements for blue badge holders had to be considered carefully because provisions made for Lewisham residents would be accessible to all blue badge holders in London.
- Blue badge holders would continue receive a free residential parking permit if they lived in a controlled parking zone. Bays for disabled car owners would be retained but a mixed approach to allocating bays had been developed over time and this needed to be harmonised.

Other policy areas.

- Parking for schools, both parents and teachers, would continue to be dealt with through school travel plans.
- Other initiatives would be brought forward when time and resources allowed.

- The tender for the new parking contract provided the Council with new possibilities. The Council was responsible for around 300 pay and display machines. Each machine would cost approximately £4000 to replace so looking for alternatives to pay and display machines would become a priority as the Council looked to phase them out.
- The policy would include provisions for electrical charging points and the use of clear signage in CPZs.

Future developments

- Following the Mayor's decision, officers proposed to develop a CPZ review programme based on a set of clear priorities. The programme would be developed in consultation with stakeholders, it would take into account a number of issues including: road safety, financial risk and local concerns. It would be reviewed annually.
- Progress of the review programme would be regularly reported.
- The Council published an annual statement of its parking accounts on the website, but the consultation indicated a level of dissatisfaction with the information available. In future, officers would provide an annual report on parking related finances, which would also provide feedback on the previous year's programme.
- Officers would look to develop the new policy following the Mayor's decision on the parking policy recommendations at the meeting on 10 April.

The Chair then invited questions from the Committee. In response to questions from the Committee Ralph Wilkinson advised:

Controlled parking zone implementation area

- The new policy would enable further flexibility in deciding on parking controls for local areas, within a standardised framework.
- The design of existing CPZs was not flawed, rather the implementation was. Officers were committed to improving the way in which new zones were implemented.
- Professionals needed to present a clear assessment of options for local people to be consulted about and decide upon.
- Officers would ensure that consultation with residents would happen early on in the process of implementing a CPZ. This would include communicating with local councillors, local assemblies and local groups.
- The proposal to set a 10% turnout threshold for the implementation of a new CPZ. This was felt to be the fairest and most practical way of implementing new CPZs.
- If the required turnout was increased to 30% then (if the rule was applied retrospectively) this would mean that only one of the existing CPZs would be in place, which would undoubtedly lead to major difficulties.
- The process of implementing a CPZ would always be process of weighing majority vs minority interests. This was because there were small areas with big problems – and people were unlikely to engage in the process until they had a specific problem themselves.

Charges

- A range of options for charging were considered.
- The differentials proposed in the options being put to the Mayor were designed to ensure that permits remained affordable, whilst meeting the overall objectives of the parking policy.
- The outcome of the decision being presented to the Mayor would determine whether there should be a reduction for most people and a small increase for some or a standard flat-rate across most residential permits.
- An extensive equalities analysis was carried out to ensure that there was not an adverse impact on any section of the community.
- At present there was not an option for permit holders to pay in instalments. This was because there was no function to discontinue permits once they had been issued. This meant someone could pay their first instalment for a permit without paying the rest and retain a valid permit for a year.
- It was anticipated that the new parking contract might provide the functionality to switch permits off and on, which would mean that permits could be paid for in instalments.
- The Council was conscious of its commitment to sustainability and the new policy sought to find the right balance between incentivising sustainable travel and ensuring that parking was affordable.
- It may be considered that people with older cars might be on low incomes, so increasing charges, through an emissions based charging scheme, for old vehicles might disproportionately impact on the least well off.
- A simple system of administering charges needed to be maintained in order to ensure costs were kept down.
- It was proposed to issue a book of ten 1-hour visitor permits per resident permit holder per year, with extra provision for elderly people in receipt of council tax benefit that do not have another parking permit. The aim of the recommendation was to ensure that provision for parking remained cost neutral. Issuing free visitor permits to every household in a CPZ would have a substantial financial impact.

Business

- The views of businesses had been taken into account. However, there was rarely a unified view from businesses in an area. For example, some businesses might prefer there to be a short period of parking enforcement over lunch, whereas for a restaurant business, this would be the worst time of day.
- Short term quick and easy parking would be good for some but a failure for others.
- Officers would ensure that they continued talking to businesses and assessing the impact of parking controls in different areas.
- Decisions about new or relaxed parking controls would be prioritised in order of impact and the financial risks would be considered.
- Businesses are charged per permit for parking. These permits cost £500 and could be shared between multiple vehicles.

Blue badges and carers permits

- Carers permits are issued to the resident and can be handed to the carer to display in their vehicle for a maximum of 4 hours.
- There were nationally determined criteria for the issue of blue badges, which were quite robust and left little space for abuse.
- The criteria for blue badges were also decided nationally. There was no indication that the number of Blue Badges in Lewisham (7200) was bigger or smaller than other London Boroughs.

Other policy areas.

- There were competing expectations about the enforcement of parking around schools.
- Some people expected that parking controls should be relaxed and others that there should be increased enforcement to reduce bottlenecks and illegal parking.
- The review recommended that this continue to be dealt with in school travel plans. This would ensure that schools were able to encourage sustainable travel, and that each locality would be encouraged to create solutions for its own unique problems.
- The clarity and visibility of signage needed to be reviewed.
- The enforcement of different hours in different areas might cause difficulties because people parking in one area of the borough might assume that parking controls were uniform across the whole borough.
- Signage could not all be changed at once because of the substantial costs involved.

Future developments

- Following the decision by the Mayor in April, officers would begin a process of prioritisation for the review of CPZs. This work could not pre-empt the Mayor's decision.
- It was intended that the new policy should be as transparent as possible.

The Chair invited Wendy Lloyd from the Lee Green working group to address the Committee. The key point to note was:

- It was indicated that many residents would prefer a two-hour option, yet in the past this had not been offered as a choice. Neighbouring zones could be managed by patrols if the slots were staggered. The reason was that greater choice would be required if residents were going to accept the result.

Resolved: officers to provide regular updates on the implementation of the CPZ review and the development of the policy prioritisation process.

6. Revenue budget savings proposals

Mark Humphreys (Group Finance Manager, Customer Services) introduced the savings report. The key points to note were:

- In the Autumn (when scrutiny committees considered the first round savings proposals) officers set out a range of possible funding scenarios. It was

anticipated that the Council would be required to make a £30m-£50m saving over the 2013-15 period.

- The subsequent financial settlement from Government represented the worst case scenario. The Council would be required to save £53.5m over this period. Meaning £21.3m needed to be saved in 2013/14 and £32.2m in 14/15.
- Previously, savings of £4.6m had been identified for 13/14. In the Autumn savings proposals £27.5m of savings were identified for 13-15, including £13m of savings for 14/15.
- The report being put before members identified further savings of £2.8m for 13/14 and £5.6m of savings for 14/15. This meant that whilst the budget would be balanced in 13/14 there remained a gap of £13m in 14/15.
- The financial situation facing the Council remained extremely challenging.

Customer services savings proposals

CUS40 (A move from weekly to fortnightly recycling)

Nigel Tyrell (Head of Environment) introduced the saving, the key points to note were:

- The implementation of the proposal would lead to the loss of 20 staff members and reduce the number of refuse vehicles used by the service.
- There were some significant risks to the achievability of the saving.
- The exact level of saving could not accurately be predicted but the changes would result in a saving of approximately £0.5m.
- Concerns about waste volumes had been taken into account. Consideration might need to be given to how larger volumes of recycling would be stored in residents' homes, the availability of street bulk facilities, and potential increases in fly-tipping.

CUS41 (Review of the regulatory services across strategic housing and environment divisions)

Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services) introduced the savings proposal. The key points to note were:

- Frontline enforcement would be protected.
- The number of managers in relation to the numbers of staff across all areas of regulation and enforcement was being reviewed.
- The proposal would reduce the number of managers.

In response to questions from the Committee Kevin Sheehan advised:

- Enforcement capacity would be maintained.
- A consultation with staff would need to take place before any changes could be implemented.

Planning and economic development savings proposals

John Miller (Head of Planning) introduced the proposals. The key point to note was:

- Planning and economic development had made significant savings in previous years. The proposal put forward in the first round – for the implementation of locally set planning fees was being delayed by central government but it was still anticipated that these measures would be put in place.

RNR33 (Reduction in economic development delivery budget)

John Miller introduced the saving proposal. The key points to note were:

- The Economic Development team had been completely restructured during the previous round of savings.
- The restructure resulted in a number of redundancies and left a small strategic development team.
- The saving would reduce the team's delivery budget and reduce administrative capacity.

RNR34 (Reduction in planning policy functions)

- It was proposed to cease, or reduce capacity for, a number of tasks in planning policy. The saving would result in the reduction of one post.

In response to questions from the Committee, John Miller advised that he recognised the Committee's concerns about the loss of capacity for planning tasks, including neighbourhood planning. He advised that planning policy work would need to be handled by the smaller team.

RNR35 (Changes to consultation and planning notices)

John Miller introduced the saving the key points to note were:

- Officers proposed to cease written notification of planning applications to neighbours of proposed developments. It was also being proposed to stop amenity panel meetings and local meetings. The proposals would result in a saving through staffing reduction.
- Other London Boroughs had moved to a system of using site notices to make communities aware of planning applications.

In response to questions from the Committee, John Miller advised:

- The approach had worked in other London Boroughs. However, further work needed to be carried out to ensure that best practice could be replicated in Lewisham.

Nigel Tyrell provided information about the comparative cost of bereavement services, as requested by the Committee at its previous budgets savings meeting.

The Committee resolved to advise the Public Accounts Select Committee of the following:

RNR34 (Reduction in planning policy functions)

- The Committee accepts that the changes being proposed will have an impact on the delivery of planning policy functions. However, the Committee believes that support for neighbourhood planning should be maintained.

RNR35 (Changes to consultation and planning notices)

- The Committee is concerned about the potential impact of this proposal. It recommends that officers be asked to explore alternative options for communicating with communities that are affected by new developments. The Committee also believes that further consideration needs to be given to the delivery of consultations relating to large planning applications.

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee.

7. Select Committee work programme

Resolved:

- To agreed the work programme for the final meeting of the municipal year.
- To invite a representative of the Grove Park Community Group to speak about neighbourhood planning.
- To move the item on recycling to the 13/14 work programme.

8. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved: In accordance with the agreed process for the scrutiny of the budget proposals the Committee resolved to refer its views to the Public Accounts Select Committee meeting scheduled for 7 February 2013.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Chair:

Date:
