

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 29 January 2013 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hall (Chair), Julia Fletcher, Carl Handley, John Muldoon and John Paschoud

ALSO PRESENT:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kevin Bonavia, Councillor Liam Curran, Councillor Alexander Feakes, Councillor Vicky Foxcroft and Councillor Pauline Morrison

## **125. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of that part of the meeting of the Panel, which was open to the press and public, held on 6 November 2012 be confirmed and signed.

## **126. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Hall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Item 5 as a council appointed Board Member of Phoenix Community Housing.

Councillor Paschoud declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Item 5 as a council appointed board member of Lewisham Homes.

## **127. Outstanding Scrutiny Matters**

Report noted.

## **128. Notification of Late and Urgent Items**

The Panel agreed to ask if all the outstanding references could be programmed within this municipal year.

## **129. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 16 January 2013**

### Housing Matters Part 1

The report was presented by the Housing Programme Manager who explained the decisions which had been proposed at Mayor and Cabinet and confirmed a further report would be made in July.

Councillor Carl Handley said he had been present at the meeting and stated the Mayor was broadly sympathetic to the suggestions and policy directions suggested by his Select Committee. He welcomed the fact residents views had

been taken into account and Housing Associations would not form part of any preferred solution. He commended efforts being made to build new homes and reiterated his belief that Lewisham Homes should take steps towards training tenants who would be equipped to take up future positions on the governing Board. He said if transfer to a tenant led organisation did take place the Council should be satisfied any such body shared its aspirations particularly with regard to building new homes.

Councillor John Paschoud said he believed there was potential for conflict between the interests of current tenants and leaseholders versus those of currently unknown but potential future tenants, which could stall any ambitious new house building programme. The Chair said he was more optimistic and pointed to the survey results which said 9 in every 10 of the current tenants polled supported the provision of affordable housing as a priority activity.

The Chair welcomed the reduction of future consideration to two options. He further stated he believed Lewisham Homes as a matter of urgency should consider the democratisation of the recruitment of Tenants and Residents as Board members and that this view again be put to the Mayor.

Councillor Paschoud asked if there were any constraints in the Lewisham Homes Constitution preventing popular election of Tenant representatives. The Head of Law said she would find out subsequent to the meeting.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Mayor be noted and that he be asked to consider the democratisation of the appointment of tenant and resident representatives on the Lewisham Homes Board.

## Housing Matters Part 2

The report was presented by the Housing Programme Manager who said there were two main elements, one proposing consultation on four sites in existing council ownership and a second concerning two bids to the GLA fund for supported housing.

Councillor Fletcher expressed concerns about the scale of proposals at the site proposed in her ward and said she believed there would be significant planning problems and local objections.

The Chair said the Panel was not the appropriate body to consider the Planning merits of the individual sites but that he believed officers should ensure that the appropriate ward members should be consulted about proposals planned for their areas.

Councillor Fletcher asked if the initial capacity study mentioned in the report could be provided. The Housing Programme Manager said a longer list of sites to be considered in the next 12-24 months could be provided. The Chair added he could see no merit in providing a further list of sites that had been considered and already deemed unsuitable.

The Chair said he would expect a further report on proposed sites to be considered at the first Housing Select Committee meeting in the next municipal year.

Councillor Paschoud said the report's financial implications did not appear to reflect the business model. The Head of Business Management and Service Support said the financial implications were appropriate for the work done so far and that a proper financial model would be developed as proposals emerged.

The Chair concluded that the Panel supported working up proposals and that additional information on sites should be presented to both Housing Select Committee and Business Panel members in the first cycle of the new municipal year. He also said a preliminary assessment of costs should come to the Mayor and Cabinet at an early stage and be fed into the Housing Strategy.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Mayor be noted.

#### Assets of Community Value

The report was presented by the Head of Law who said the proposals represented a community right to bid rather than a community right to buy.

Councillor Paschoud queried the Scheme of Delegation saying there did not appear to be a political input. The Head of Law said that was by design as there was no discretion and statutory guidance stipulated decisions were to be taken by officers judging applications strictly in accordance with a series of prescribed tests.

Councillor Handley asked if churches were eligible to apply and was informed by the Head of Law that as long as they met the tests to be regarded as an eligible community organisation, then yes they could.

Councillor Fletcher asked if Councillors could take part as members of an eligible community organisation and was informed that they could.

She further asked if information could be provided about Community Interest Companies and was informed by the Head of Law that she had a short paper she could provide after the meeting.

The Chair said he believed there should be a regular review of the scheme and the apparent financial implications for the local authority should be linked to a political process. He added further representations ought to be made to the DCLG regarding the compensation arrangements and that individual councils should not be expected to foot the bills. He proposed that representations calling for fair financing of arrangements for the listing of assets of community value be made to the government. The Head of Law said she would be happy to do that.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Mayor be noted and representations be made to the DCLG calling for the fair financing of compensation for the listing of assets of community value.

#### **130. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet (Contracts) on 16 January 2013**

None was identified for discussion.

#### **131. Overview & Scrutiny Select Committees Work Programmes 2012-13 oral update**

The Chair reported arrangements were in place for a smooth transaction of the Budget process with linked meetings of the Public Accounts Select Committee, the Business Panel, the Mayor & Cabinet and the Council.

The Chair announced there would be a joint meeting on the Youth Service of the Children & Young People Select Committee and the Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee on February 13 at 7.30pm The Labour Group would be proposing Councillor John Paschoud be elected as chair and Councillor Pauline Morrison as vice chair.

The Chair also said the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would meet on February 11 and that he would like to see draft papers in advance.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Chair

- 132. Exclusion of the Press and Public**
- 133. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 16 January 2013**
- 134. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet (Contracts) on 16 January 2013**
- 135. Decisions made by Executive Director Under Delegated Authority - Adoption of National Open Government License**
- 136. Decisions made by Executive Director Under Delegated Authority**