

# MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS SELECT COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 September 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Jamie Milne (Chair), Mark Ingleby (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Chris Barnham, Ami Ibitson, Roy Kennedy, Helen Klier, Jim Mallory and Crada Onuegbu

APOLOGIES: Councillor John Muldoon

ALSO PRESENT: Dave Borland (Change and Innovation Manager), Duncan Dewhurst (Head of Service Change and Technology), Helen Glass (Principal Lawyer), Andrew Hagger (Scrutiny Manager), John Miller (Head of Planning), Georgina Nunney (Principal Lawyer), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services) and Councillor James-J Walsh

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014

### Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014 were agreed.

## 2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were none.

## 3. Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy

3.1 John Miller (Head of Planning) introduced the report and highlighted the following information:

- Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements (S106) are mitigation for development not accounted for through a planning condition on the planning permission.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows local authorities to raise funds from developers to fund a wide range of local and strategic infrastructure that is needed to support growth and development. CIL will provide developers with more certainty up front about how much money they will be expected to contribute towards borough infrastructure needs and is a sum per square metre of the development.
- The Mayor of London has own infrastructure levy, which is set at £35 per square metre in Lewisham. Developers must pay this levy before paying the Lewisham CIL.
- Larger sums from S106 agreements have recently come in, which has increased the amount held by the Council. These larger sums can be used more strategically for projects. There is a need to co-ordinate S106 and CIL monies with the capital programme of the Council more closely.

3.2 In response to questions from the Committee, John Miller provided the following information:

- The CIL rates were discussed extensively before going to Full Council for approval and will be adopted in April 2015. Some other local authorities have a

Category C rate of £0 per square metre as Lewisham does and the rate has been set at this level to encourage jobs to the borough.

- Some local authorities have complex matrices of uses and locations to decide CIL rates. For example, Wandsworth has a matrix that includes a rate in excess of £300 per square metre in the Nine Elms development area.
- The S106 sums for the Convoys Wharf development have been set by the GLA and are set out in their report.
- There is no specific requirement to consult with local communities on allocating S106 funding, however officers are discussing with local communities and local assemblies about how to spend some of the funds allocated for community and leisure facilities.
- There is more flexibility in CIL about how it can be spent as there are not the same controls on where it has to be spent as there are for S106.
- If the developer cannot pay the CIL then the development cannot go ahead and CIL is not paid until the development commences.
- There is a S106 steering group made up of officers that lets people know what funding is available, so that the Council can better match the funds with needs.
- A S106 agreement may have funds that come under a number of different headings, the funds must then be used for that specified purpose. For example, one heading could be funding for schools to mitigate the impact of new population. S106 money must be spent in the geographic area specified in the agreement.
- Significant funds from large developments in Deptford and New Cross are just starting to come through and there is more to be released as phases of the developments are completed. The S106 for Convoys Wharf has a series of headings and will be spent locally.
- Review mechanisms around affordable housing have been introduced to some schemes. These came in at the time of the economic downturn and specify that if residential units achieve a certain level of sales value then more affordable housing can be added in later phases. These are reviewed and agreed as the phases come forward but developments being implemented with these agreements are still in their early stages of delivery.
- Larger schemes will be financially reviewed at each phase, as these have outline permission. This should make it transparent where additional payments for S106 agreements are due.
- Historically the relatively low level of development meant that S106 produced a small amount of funding annually at a time when public sector funding was in good supply. Now larger sums are coming forward at a time of public sector constraints in budgets, so officers are exploring how to better use S106 money.
- Some activities are funded through S106, such as employment and training and it is possible to expand activities funded by S106 money, for example funding project management costs. However it is not possible to carry out large scale budget substitution of existing Council posts and functions with it.

### 3.3 The Committee then discussed the following issues:

- The public can have the perception that S106 agreements are payments to 'buy' the support of a Planning Committee, even though the clear rationale of mitigation is set out in the planning reports.
- The success of S106 agreements should be made clearer and publicised. This will enable councillors on planning committees to see the impacts of the agreements and so that local people can see the benefits for their local areas.

## **Resolved:**

The Committee will receive an update on an example of Section 106 spending once a suitable scheme has been realised and further details on how Section 106 monies received from the scheme have been spent.

### **4. Review of ICT in Lewisham**

- 4.1 Duncan Dewhurst (Interim Head of Service Change and Technology) introduced the presentation and outlined the following information:
- Officers are developing a new IT strategy for Lewisham. Drivers for the IT strategy include linking IT provision to the business direction, addressing customer need and keeping pace with changes in technology. Officers have discovered that IT can be a blocker in the organisation when it should be an enabler and the new strategy will aim to make sure that IT does not hold the organisation back.
  - The Capita contract has a breakpoint in March/April 2016.
  - There is a need to address the ageing IT infrastructure and make sure it is Public Services Network compliant.
  - Corporate IT is currently made up of 3 teams and there is an overall spend of £10.6m per year, with £8.15m of that centralised spend and the rest spent directly by service areas. This is not expensive in comparison to other London Boroughs.
- 4.2 Officers have recognised the problems with IT facilities for councillors and to address some of these they will:
- Enable Wi-Fi in the Civic Suite
  - Enable access to SharePoint and the intranet on tablets
  - Improve the support on offer from Capita, including named people in Capita to deal with Members.
- 4.3 In response to questions from the Committee, Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services), Duncan Dewhurst and Dave Borland (Change and Innovation Manager) provided the following information:
- 'Big data' presents an opportunity to capture more information and use it to inform what we do. This is something that will be explored, including what data needs to be collected and how to use it.
  - Officers are considering ICT support options and arrangements. This includes how much it will cost, how to tie contracted IT into delivering the IT strategy, whether to operate a thin client or extended client approach, as well as the time taken to re-tender a contract should that be required.
  - IT provision ties into the Lewisham Future Programme as it is key to making efficiencies and supporting key services.
  - Officers are looking at reducing the number of applications that we use.
  - There have been teething issues with the introduction of Oracle, which is not unexpected. Lewisham is sharing Oracle with 6 other Councils and should save money in the long term.
  - Members IT support has been poor. Better access for tablets will be introduced, although there have been technical security issues around remote log-in.

- There is a need to build up the infrastructure and capability if Lewisham is going to be able to deliver good services, which is the aim.
- The issue of the digital divide and those not able to access digital services needs to be part of any digital strategy and approach.
- Lewisham currently has a 'flat network' infrastructure, which is part of the reason why becoming PSN compliant has caused problems. Another factor has been interpretation of the guidelines, however Lewisham has to have PSN compliance sign-off from the Cabinet Office to be able to access vital information to deliver services.

**Resolved:**

That any draft IT strategy should come to the Committee before it goes to Mayor & Cabinet for decision.

**5. No Recourse to Public Funds Review - Scoping Paper**

5.1 Andrew Hagger (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the scoping report. The Committee then discussed the following points:

- While the needs of the people presenting as NRPF are important, the primary focus of the review should be on eligibility.
- Information provided for the review should include the approaches that other local authorities are taking to NRPF, as well as the financial impacts of NRPF.
- Where people are coming from when they present as NRPF and why Lewisham's numbers are so high.
- Someone from the housing sector should be invited to an evidence session to contribute to the review
- A representative from the civil service should be invited at an evidence session to contribute to the review
- The need for case studies to highlight how the process works and the issues faced.

**Resolved:**

The Committee agreed the key lines of inquiry and timetable for the review as set out in the scoping paper.

**6. Select Committee work programme**

6.1 Andrew Hagger (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the work programme report.

**Resolved:**

The Committee agreed the work programme.

**7. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet**

7.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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