

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 10 December 2013 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Suzannah Clarke (Vice-Chair), Obajimi Adefiranye, John Bowen, Julia Fletcher, Mark Ingleby and Eva Stamirowski and Alan Hall

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ami Ibitson and Marion Nisbet

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Interim Head of Corporate Resources), Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer), Paul Hadfield (Enterprise Development Manager), Mark Humphreys (Group Finance Manager, Customer Services), John Miller (Head of Planning), Kevin Turner (Economic Development Manager), Nigel Tyrell (Head of Environment), Roo Angell (Sayes Court Garden) and Bob Bagley (Sayes Court Garden)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2013

Resolved: to accept the minutes of the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2013 as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Clarke declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item seven as a member of the National Trust and a supporter of English Heritage.

Councillor Fletcher declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item seven as a member of the National Trust.

3. Response from Mayor and Cabinet: air quality

This item was considered after item 5.

Resolved: to note the response.

4. Response from Mayor and Cabinet: the business development review

4.1 Kevin Turner (Economic Development Manager) introduced the response; the following key points were noted:

- Officers had been working to implement the Committee's recommendations.
- The Economic Development team continued to build on areas of strength, such as organising 'meet the buyer' events for local businesses to engage with procurement opportunities through council contracts; developing targeted communications through Lewisham Life and expanding the business directory.
- Some of the Committee's recommendations were beyond the scope of the Economic Development team and required a corporate response, which had been addressed in the development of the business growth strategy.

- The Council continued to work with partners to maximise the effectiveness of resources available for business development.

4.2 In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Any of the proposed extensions to the DLR, Bakerloo line or Overground would be positive for the borough's businesses.
- Resources had been made available on the Council's website to support local groups that wanted to carry out their own community improvement projects.

Resolved: to note the response. To circulate the information on the Council's website about starting a community project.

5. Strategic financial review update and savings proposals for 2014/15 and 2015/16

This item was considered following item 2.

5.1 David Austin (Interim Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the report, noting that:

- The Council's net revenue budget in 2013/14 was £285m.
- The Council had made savings of £82m since 2010 with a further £16m agreed for 2014/15.
- It was anticipated that an additional £85m of savings would need to be found in the next four years. It was expected that this would require savings of £15m in 2014/15, £30m in 2015/16, £20m in 2016/17 and £20m in 2017/18.
- Details of the local government finance settlement would be announced in December 2013, which would provide more clarity about the level of savings required for 2014/15 and 2015/16.
- The Council needed to evaluate the delivery of all of its services.
- The Lewisham Future Programme had been set up to take an overarching view of the savings proposals.
- The new savings process would be carried out on an on-going basis.
- Saving proposals would be regularly brought to scrutiny.

5.2 In response to questions from the Committee the following key points were noted:

- Officers in corporate resources would be working with the scrutiny team to ensure that Members had early sight of proposals.
- Savings which had a significant community impact would be highlighted to Members as early as possible in the decision making process.
- A substantial proportion of savings for coming years would be brought forward from June/July 2014, at the beginning of the new administration.

5.3 Nigel Tyrell introduced savings proposal CUS03, noting that:

- The savings proposal was based on data collected from existing refuse rounds. The figures indicated that some refuse rounds had the capacity to collect more waste; this was particularly the case since the implementation of 'wheely' bins, which made collection quicker and easier.

- The service was also developing a route optimisation strategy to ensure that recycling rounds were making the most effective use of their time and effort.
- As part of the strategic financial review the environment service would be required to save £4m.
- If the Council was still sending the majority of its waste to landfill then this saving would be straightforward to find by implementing measures to reduce landfill costs.
- However, the Council had the foresight to develop the South East London Combined Heat and Power energy recovery facility (SELCHP), which diverted waste from landfill by converting it into energy.
- The economic case for increasing recycling rates in most authorities was driven by the cost of landfill, whereas Lewisham had an integrated approach to dealing with refuse in the borough, which did not provide the same economic impetus.
- In Lewisham food waste and garden waste collected in general waste bins was converted into energy and heat at SELCHP. Setting up a new process to divert this waste from SELCHP would cost money to implement with little current benefit to Lewisham.
- However, if the Council could find a way to sell the spare capacity at SELCHP to generate revenue, then there would be an incentive to reduce food waste and garden waste.
- The Council had attempted to sell its spare capacity in the past – which had met resistance from Viola – who are the operators of SELCHP. The Council would be looking to re-visit this discussion.

5.4 In response to questions from the Committee the following key points were noted:

- 8% of Lewisham waste was still sent to landfill. This consisted mostly of items too large to take to SELCHP.
- The Council was considering way in which it might deal with large items of waste – including purchasing an industrial sized shredder for use at Wearside.
- Changes at Wearside might also help the Council to pre-sort other kinds of waste – and create alternative streams of revenue by dealing with waste from other boroughs.
- Residents in the south of the borough could pay to use garden waste disposal facilities in Bromley.

5.5 John Miller (Head of Planning) introduce savings proposal RNR02, noting that:

- Options to reduce costs and increase income were being considered in the strategic financial review. Savings proposal RNR02 would increase income by charging for pre-application planning advice.

5.6 In response to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The charges for small applications had not yet been determined.
- There was no pre-application fee for planning advice at present.

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views to the Public Accounts Select Committee on 16 December, as follows-

The strategic financial review

The Committee recommends that, given the rolling programme of savings to be identified as part of the Lewisham Future programme, scrutiny committees are given as early notice as possible of identified savings.

The Committee has resolved to add a standing item to its work programme in order to consider regular updates and information about savings proposals.

Savings proposals 2014/15 and 2015/16

CUS03

The Committee believes that the Council should develop a communications plan which targets registered social landlords in the borough in order to ensure that refuse and recycling bins on housing estates are not used for trade waste.

RNR02

The Committee asks that before any decision on RNR02 is taken more information be provided about the level of charges being proposed. These proposals should be compared with other London boroughs to ensure that they are proportionate.

6. **Business growth strategy**

This item was considered after item 4.

6.1 Kevin Turner introduced the report, noting that:

- The business growth strategy set out the Council's ambition to support enterprise in the borough over the next ten years.
- It represented a corporate view about how the Council should create an environment where businesses could thrive and to grow.
- It established a longer term vision and set out opportunities for partnership working to maximise the resources available.

6.2 In response to questions from the Committee the following key points were noted:

- Lewisham had an active and engaged Economic Development and Enterprise partnership, which worked to deliver strategic plans for the borough.
- The partnership was made up of a mixture of business, training and employment organisations.

Resolved: to note the report.

7. **Convoys Wharf: Sayes Court**

7.1 Roo Angell and Bob Bagley from the Sayes Court Garden project introduced a PowerPoint presentation, noting that:

- The development of Sayes Court garden represented an opportunity to create a high quality open space in an area that was currently deficient in open spaces.

- Horticulture contributed £9B to the UK economy, however at present there was a chronic shortage of horticulture skills in the UK, which posed a significant threat to the industry and to the UK economy as a whole.
- The Sayes Court Garden project provided a range of opportunities to improve education, training, welfare, heritage, tourism and horticultural research in north Lewisham.
- The original garden was founded by John Evelyn and had a history which extended over three hundred years.
- John Evelyn recognised the importance of horticulture to quality of life in London. He believed, before there was scientific evidence, that trees could be used to improve air quality.
- The garden was the birthplace of the National Trust.
- The Trust had been a key supporter of the development of a new garden on the site of the original.
- The current proposals for Sayes Court garden put forward by Hutchison Whampoa in the Convoys Wharf masterplan represented a fraction of what could be achieved on the site. The existing plans would obscure the foundations of the original Sayes Court manor and fail to use the opportunity to create a new tourist attraction and cultural centre in Deptford.
- English Heritage believed the archaeology should be made visible/accessible within a stand-alone building, set within open space.

7.2 In response to questions from the Committee the following points were noted:

- A study was being carried out to determine the full potential of the site to deliver jobs and training activities.
- Joan Ruddock had been a key supporter of the scheme.
- Engagement from Hutchison Whampoa had been mixed. The developer started out by appearing to be open to the idea of creating a new garden at Sayes Court, this openness had been short lived and at present HW were unresponsive to further requests for discussions with community groups about the masterplan.
- A new school was needed on site. At present this was proposed by the developers to be adjacent to Sayes Court Park on the masterplan.
- This would be in the middle of the new garden proposed by the Sayes Court Garden project.
- A short briefing would be written that could be circulated to Members and their contacts to help raise awareness of the benefits of the scheme.

Resolved: to note the presentation; to refer the Committee's views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows –

- The Committee has resolved to write to the Mayor of London in support of the project.
- The Committee recommends that the project's preferred proposals for the new Sayes Court Garden should be noted and should receive the appropriate level of support from the Council in submissions to the upcoming planning hearing for the Convoys Wharf development.
- The Committee urges the Mayor of Lewisham to write to the Mayor of London in support of the project and to work jointly with the office of the Mayor of London and the London Assembly to support the development of Sayes Court Garden, in the context of the Convoys Wharf planning hearing.

8. Select Committee work programme

8.1 Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the work programme item, noting that:

- Members had agreed to scrutinise transport related issues at their next meeting. Simon Moss, from the Council's transport division would be in attendance to update members on the bid to create new TfL 'quietways' in the borough and to discuss the latest developments on plans for the extension of the Overground, DLR and Bakerloo line.
- Councillor Ingleby had put forward a proposal to scrutinise the planning service annual monitoring report (AMR).

8.2 The Committee discussed the work programme noting that:

- The AMR might provide a good overview of the borough's strategic plans and may be of interest to incoming Members of the administration in June 2014. However, it would be preferable to consider it before the end of the current administration if there was space on the Committee's work programme.
- The item on highways was low priority and should be removed from the work programme in preference of post decision scrutiny of the AMR.

Resolved: to agree the amendments to the work programme and to add an additional item to agenda for February to consider the planning service annual monitoring report.

9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved:

- to refer the Committee's views under items five to the Public Accounts Select Committee.
- to refer the Committee's views under item seven to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Chair:

Date:
