

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 25 July 2017 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hall (Chair), Liam Curran, Carl Handley, John Muldoon, Jim Mallory and Luke Sorba

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Maja Hilton, Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin and Councillor Pauline Morrison

22. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the open meeting held on 11 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

23. Declarations of Interests

None received.

24. Outstanding Scrutiny Items

Panel Members noted that there had been slippages on the responses for the four items listed in the report. They were informed by the Head of Business Committee that the responses had been delayed following Legal Advice to do so until after the General Election. These responses have now been agreed at the Mayor and Cabinet meeting on 19 July and would be going to the respective Select Committees.

The Chair said he was aware that the response to the Post Office Services referral might be sensitive, and requested that Business Panel Members be kept informed about the results of the consultations.

Action >>>>> ED Customer Service

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

25. Notification of Late and Urgent Items

Report noted.

26. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 19 July 2017

Beckenham Place Park Regeneration Update

The Project Manager, Regeneration and Asset Management introduced the report. The Chair thanked officers for their tabled response to the questions received from a member of the public, and asked that the questions and responses be published on the Council's website.

Action >>>>> ED Res.& Regen.

Business Panel Members asked if it would only be the eastern side of the railway used for the flood alleviation scheme, and whether embankments would be built around the east end of the park, and this was confirmed by officers.

Councillor Sorba said that he did not receive a complete answer to his earlier question to officers about the criteria used to determine who was appointed Manager to the Mansion. He said there had been rumours about the Council demonstrating favouritism. The Senior Programme Manager Regeneration and Place explained the options open to officers and their decision to identify a tenant in order to safeguard the building, and save on security costs. Councillor Sorba asked that Business Panel Members be sent the information on the selection process for the Manager of the building.

Action >>>>> ED Res.& Regen.

The Chair questioned whether due diligence was in place when the selection was done. He asked whether the Council would benefit from profits made by the Manager of the building, and was told it was unlikely there would be any profit from this arrangement, as the Council was already saving around £450k from the lease put in place. The Chair said he was concerned that Members were not informed of the process officers had chosen to select the Manager of the building.

Councillor Curran said Panel Members were concerned that the selection process did not seem open and fair, and other members of the public might have wanted to put in a bid given the opportunity. He added that the bid for the Heritage Lottery had to be done right, but 5 years might be a long time. The Project Manager, Regeneration and Asset Management responded that more activities were taking place in the Mansion now than ever, and more events and activities would be added over the years. She said the Council might even see some profit within the next few years.

The Senior Programme Manager Regeneration and Place said officers had feedback from various groups about activities in the building, and so far they were happy with its current use. The Chair said if decisions were being made by a small group of officers, a lot of opposition should be expected from members of the public and other organisations. The Chair said key stakeholders needed to be engaged in the process.

The Project Manager, Regeneration and Asset Management said she was sorry to hear about opposition to the present use of the building as she had received a lot of positive feedback to date. Councillor Sorba commented that he was glad to hear about the various activities that were been held at the venue, and requested an audit of the socio economic and ethnic background of those participating at these activities for Business Panel Members. Councillor Curran said it was widely known that people from ethnic and low socio economic background were not usually attracted to parks and open spaces, therefore activities that would attract them should be included.

Action >>>>> ED Res.& Regen.

The Project Manager, Regeneration and Asset Management said she would be happy to do a briefing on details of paid activities and free events that were currently taking place in the building. The Chair said that would be useful, as the public had not been given sufficient information. Business Panel requested an analysis of how the decision was taken, including information on Member and public engagement, in a report for the next Sustainable Development Committee meeting. Business Panel agreed that officers should ensure more public involvement going forward.

Action >>>>> ED Res.& Regen.

RESOLVED that:

- i. the Mayor's decision be noted.
- ii. the Mayor be requested to ask officers to involve key stakeholders and members of the public in the proposals for Beckenham Place Park going forward.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Financial Forecasts

The Chair proposed that both financial items be discussed at the same time, this was agreed by Panel members.

The Head of Corporate Resources introduced the reports. The Chair thanked him for the briefings he had sent to Panel Members to date. The Chair said that the last General Elections had changed the landscape and Panel Members would like to know what to expect in the coming years.

The Head of Corporate Resources said there was uncertainty in connection with the funding regime in the next couple of years. He added that last year the Council overspent its budget, and officers were forecasting an overspend this year, with the Council using its reserves to address the deficit. The Head of Corporate Resources explained to Panel Members that £30m cuts was needed for the next financial year, and £50m cuts during the following 4 years.

The Chair asked when Members would have a chance to scrutinise the budget proposals and was told before the Autumn term budget announcement. The Chair said based on the assumptions there would be a cap on public sector pay rise, but asked what effect a 2% pay rise would have on the budget. The Head of Corporate Resources said it would roughly equate to £2m.

Councillor Mallory thanked officers for the presentation and asked what was being done to address the financial issues the Council was faced with. The Head of Corporate Resources said there were a number of things being put in place which included investments, ongoing bids for funding, savings that have been identified, and agreed. He added that officers needed to be clear and thorough. Councillor Mallory said that officers needed to be very clear in explaining why services were not being delivered when cuts are made.

The Chair said it would be useful if Members were briefed on previous proposals to include savings that were accomplished and not accomplished, and options

open to Members. The Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration said there were a few issues that arose last year. When the budget was set decisions were made to undo some of the proposed savings, and the overspending in the Children and Young People Directorate was higher than expected. She added that officers would go through the proposals thoroughly to ensure that the savings put forward could be achieved. The Chair asked for Business Panel Members to be sent the Council's response to the School Deficit Loan System consultation.

Action >>>>> ED Res. & Regen.

The Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration said officers were diligently going through the budget to look at all the options including a worse case scenario. She said they have discussed their Statutory Responsibilities and Budgetary Responsibilities, and the fear of not having enough money to deliver the Council's Statutory Responsibility, e.g. in Adult and Children Social Care. The Chair asked where Lewisham stood in comparison to other boroughs, and asked for this information to be sent to all Members.

Action >>>>> ED Res. & Regen.

The Chair asked what would be done to address the Bereavement Services overspend, and was told that officers were constantly monitoring the process, and would be looking at the pricing structure. Councillor Sorba said he was concerned about the Council not meeting its Statutory Responsibilities in Children Social Care. He said a report would be going to the Public Accounts Select Committee, and if it became an issue it should also be going to the Children and Young People Select Committee. The Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration responded that things had not quite reached that point yet.

The Chair said Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees should receive briefings from finance officers over the Summer break, as there would be service consequences especially in Adult Social Care. The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Action >>>>> ED Res. & Regen.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Mayor be noted.

New Housing Programme Update – Part 1

The Programme Manager Housing Matters introduced the report. The Chair said that the report was welcoming. Councillor Sorba concurred but added that concerns have been expressed around the change in use of the community centre in his Ward. The Programme Manager Housing Matters confirmed that the community centre would remain the same regardless of other changes. The Chair asked if the Council would achieve its objective of building 500 new homes, and was told that this has not yet been achieved but most of them would be on site by next year. It was noted that there were some issues that needed to be addressed.

Councillor Handley, Chair of Housing Select Committee said when the manifesto was drawn the Council pledged 500 new homes but as practicalities like planning permission and location of sites arose things became difficult. He said it was likely

that the numbers would be 200 short, but by 2019, 500 homes would be up and running. The Chair said it might be necessary to have an important discussion on how the Council could achieve the maximum number of homes. Councillor Mallory said he was aware of issues identifying sites for these homes. The Chair thanked officers for the report.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Mayor be noted.

27. Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees Work Programmes 2017-18 - oral update

The Interim Scrutiny Manager informed Panel Members that most of the Select Committees had met, and currently there were 2 health issues on the Healthier Communities Select Committee agenda, and the tabled referral would be going to Mayor and Cabinet in September.

Councillor Muldoon informed Panel Members that contrary to some views the ICO Health Group proposal for Grove Park was not a done deal as it would need the cooperation of GPs, and there was a risk of not having planning application granted. It was noted that a referral had been made to Mayor and Cabinet to consider urgently.

The Chair proposed that the referral should be brought to the attention of the Mayor, requesting that the Mayor is asked to decide whether an urgent action was required. This was agreed by Panel Members.

Action >>>>> ED Res. & Regen.

Councillor Curran informed Panel Members that an issue had arisen during the Grenfell Tower discussion, it had come to Members attention that Lewisham was only responsible for 60% of all the tall buildings in the borough with the rest privately owned. On behalf of the Sustainable Development Select Committee he proposed that Health and Safety checks and risk assessment that had been recommended for all Council owned tall Buildings should be extended to all tall buildings to include privately owned ones. Panel Members agreed the proposal.

The Chair informed Members that he had written a letter to the Chief Executive asking for information about safety checks on all tall Buildings in the Lewisham Regeneration areas. He said reports on this would be going to the Housing Select Committee, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Sustainable Development Select Committee.

Councillor Curran said the Sustainable Development Select Committee was also seeking the co-operation of the Fire Brigade to produce the information on safety checks done on all Lewisham tall buildings to be made available to the public.

The Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration said there was a discussion about private properties at the last Sustainable Development Select Committee. She said officers would do their best to assess the information collected and would pass on this information to all Council Members.

Action >>>>> ED Res. & Regen.

Business Panel Members noted and welcomed the cancellation of the JHOSC meeting scheduled for 26 July. The Chair thanked the Head of Law for the Legal Advice she gave, as this information would assist in requesting that JHOSC consider the proposal for consultation for Lewisham hospital.

RESOLVED that:

- i. that the report be noted.
- ii. that the referral from the Healthier Communities Select Committee on the consolidation of the ICO Health Group primary care services in Grove Park and the intention to build a new purpose-built Health Centre be brought to the attention of the Mayor, and that he be asked to exercise his discretion and decide whether any urgent action was required.

28. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act, as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to information) (Amendments) (England) Regulations 2006 and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:

The following is a summary of the items considered in the closed part of the meeting:

29. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 19 July 2017

Catford Programme Update and A205 Realignment Options 1 & 2

RESOLVED that the decision of the Mayor be noted.

Meeting ended: 8:55pm

Chair.....