

# MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 8 November 2017 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Mark Ingleby (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Andre Bourne, Suzannah Clarke, Amanda De Ryk, Sophie McGeevor, Eva Stamirowski, Paul Upex and James-J Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Deborah Efemini (Capital Project Manager), Nick Harvey (Cycling Programme Manager), Jessie Lea (Senior Programme Manager), Kplom Lotsu (SGM Capital Programmes), Emma Talbot (Head of Planning) and Sarah Walsh (Regeneration and Urban Design Planning Manager)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2017

1.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September be agreed as an accurate record, subject to a minor amendment as follows: the full title of the Intercultural Cities report mentioned at the last meeting was 'Knowing Lewisham'.

## 2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were none.

## 3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

3.1 There were none.

## 4. Lewisham Future Programme

4.1 David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources) introduced the report, the following key points were noted:

- Local Government was on a journey of austerity that started in 2010 and would continue until at least 2020 (and likely into the mid-2020s).
- There were an unusual number of uncertainties, pressures and risks in planning the Council's future finances. There had been a number of changes (and further changes were anticipated) around council tax and the social care precept.
- The Council was still awaiting additional information about the funding review, it was anticipated that there would be further changes to the new homes bonus.
- There was a possibility that there would be changes to the Better Care Fund.
- There were also upcoming changes to the pooling of business rates in London, as well as potential longer term changes to demographics and Lewisham's potential future tax base.
- The Council's target for savings in 2018/19 was £22m, which included £5m of savings from 2017/18 that had not been achieved.
- It was proving increasingly challenging to deliver savings.
- The Council was currently forecasting £13m of overspend for 2017/18, including £7m of unachieved savings.
- Savings that had been agreed were taking longer to deliver.

- It was felt that the strategic challenge set by the Lewisham Future Programme was correct but the current focus was on delivering savings that had already been identified.
- Reserves would need to be used for the end of year overspend, as well as the unachieved savings target. This figure was currently in the region of £30m.

4.2 David Austin responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- The £30m that would be taken from reserves was made up of £13m overspend from 2017/18 and the shortfall in the savings for 2018/19.
- The current level of reserves was £149m. £79m was committed. The other £70m had some commitments against it – but it was earmarked for certain projects that would have to be cancelled if the level of savings required next year was not achieved.
- There were very few areas of the Council that were not trying to make savings.
- The biggest single area of overspending was children’s services, which represented £7m of the existing £13m overspend. £1m of the overspend in children’s services was as a result of unachieved savings.
- Some additional spending was also required in children’s services following the Ofsted inspection. Over time the changes would produce efficiencies.
- Another area that was overspending was the environment division. The delay in introducing the fortnightly collections and changes necessary to improve fleet vehicles had created a £1m overspend.
- Adult services also had some unachieved savings but they were in a better financial position than children’s services because of the nationally recognised pressure on adults’ services and the additional funding that had been made available.
- Changes to IT were producing efficiency to officers’ work. Better data was also available about the impact of decisions.
- There were also efficiencies being found through IT for in the customer facing aspects of the Council’s services.
- There was some good news in the savings programme, but not at the scale of the challenges that were being faced. Joining the London business rate pool should be beneficial for Lewisham and might provide Lewisham with an extra £3m a year.
- There were minor risks to the London pooling arrangements failing. All boroughs had to agree to the pooling for it to take effect. However, leaders of councils in London had all agreed to the new process so the political will was in place and it was left to officers to manage the process.
- There was a variable definition of what constituted statutory and non-statutory services.
- The Council provided about £15m of purely voluntary services – most of the remainder of the provision of services was a matter of interpretation and degree.
- There were £13m of completely un-earmarked reserves. Of the earmarked reserves, some were being used to build up funds to meet future contractual financial commitments, some funds were allocated to schools and there were some funds for paying insurance balances.
- There was also funding allocated to: the transformation programme; potential redundancies as the organisation downsized and outstanding pension liabilities from legacy organisations.

4.3 Emma Talbot (Head of Planning) introduced savings proposal P3 – the following key points were noted:

- The planning service had previously proposed a saving of £240k for 2018/19, made up of £200k of income and £40k to be found from a minor restructure.
- Since the saving had been proposed, officers had been working on the income part of the proposal. However, the Government had proposed an increase of planning fees by 20%. In order to accept this increase councils had to commit not to reduce their base planning budgets.
- Legislation had been laid out to implement these changes and it was anticipated that they would come into place next year.
- Officers were looking at generating additional surplus, which meant that the service would not only achieve the £200k it had originally set out, but also an additional £70k, which would more than offset the saving it would not make from the restructure.
- Income for non-statutory services provided £370k of income last year and it was anticipated that it would make £450k this year. Therefore, the projection of making £200k was relatively conservative.
- The service was looking at using charges to cover staffing costs.
- Developers were positive about paying for improved service delivery.
- It was unlikely that the planning service would reach a zero net position in terms of costs and income.
- Running the service as professionally as possible meant that people would be willing to pay for quality delivery.
- The planning service was also intending to ensure that it continued to offer some services for free.

4.4 Emma Talbot responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- There was currently a maximum £150 charge for an appointment with a duty planner (it was anticipated that this would rise by 20%).
- The charge provided advice about plans for changes to a property, which were reviewed against existing policies to determine whether they were likely to be approved. Applicants were also invited to a meeting to discuss the plans with their agent (if they had one) to get advice about how best to make their plans compliant.
- The appointment also provided the opportunity for officers to encourage people to speak to their neighbours- and to engage quality architects.
- A review of the delivery of the service indicated that it had improved the quality of plans being submitted and increased satisfaction.
- For a larger planning applications there was a longer process, which involved a series of meetings with a dedicated planner.
- Alongside these changes, the Council would provide additional information online about what people needed planning permission for.
- Advice given to applicants was reviewed and quality controlled by managers in order to ensure that it was consistent.
- Pre-application advice was given carefully and always related to agreed policy.
- It was made clear to applicants that pre-application advice was not a final decision and that the advice was not binding on the Council.
- The planning service regularly shared best practice and advice with other councils.
- After every planning committee meeting, there was a debrief with all officers in the service about the outcome of the meeting.
- The Council did not want to introduce charges for very minor services. In some cases, looking at many small scale changes would not be cost effective.

- The planning service intended to do more work to manage expectations about planning advice and decisions.
- The government had ring-fenced planning expenditure for the remainder of the parliament. It had strongly encouraged all local planning authorities in the country to submit to the new terms. This meant that the base budget for the planning service could not be cut.
- The service was considering which budgets planning related and support services were allocated to.
- There was an increasing scale of charges for advice on applications of different sizes (depending of the number of units being proposed in a new development).
- Creating a schedule of charges for small scale schemes (including homeowners) on a sliding scale would likely be very labour intensive to manage.
- Payment by developers for planning services did not impinge on the independence of the planning service nor the professionalism of officers.
- When there were problems with developers schemes which were not progressing positively as part of a planning performance agreement the planning agreement could be terminated and this had happened previously.
- It was not currently proposed to change the statement of community involvement in order to cease publishing neighbour letters about planning permissions.

4.5 In the Committee discussion the following key point was also noted:

- Some other councils were charging more for their duty planning service.

4.6 **Resolved:** that the report be noted.

## 5. Lewisham cycling strategy

5.1 Nick Harvey (Cycling Programme Manager) introduced the update. The following key points were noted:

- The second draft cycling strategy was consulted on in October, it was based on comments from key stakeholders – including the select committee and Lewisham Cyclists.
- There were 53 individual responses to the consultation. 80% of the respondents were Lewisham residents and 85% of respondents were cyclists or cycled at least once a week. 86% of the respondents said that the strategy had clear aims and 75% agreed that these were the right aims. 55% of respondents found the strategy easy or very easy to understand a further 36% found it neither easy nor difficult.
- There were a number of suggestions for changes to the strategy, including: concern about the lack of a delivery plan (which would be included in the Local Infrastructure Plan annual submission); the identification of funding for the different elements of the delivery of the strategy (more information would be included in the finalised version for the strategy); the standards for new infrastructure (the London design standards would be used); disability cycling and the use of non-traditional cycles (further information about this would also be included in the finalised strategy – and all new infrastructure schemes would give consideration to non-traditional cycles); the general maintenance and condition of the roadway (this fell down the list of current concerns for highways inspectors, changes would be made to improve the way that the Council dealt with repairs, missing signage and alternative arrangements during traffic diversions).

5.2 Nick Harvey responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- There were a number of sustainable bike days and bike to work days in the UK. The Council's road safety team were responsible for promoting these activities locally.
- There were proposals to bring 'dockless bikes' (as opposed to the Mayor of London's bikes, which were checked in and checked out at docking stations) to Lewisham.
- There was a joint partnership with Southwark Council to supply and deliver bike hangers in Lewisham. Initially it was considered that it would be straightforward to deliver new hangers but it was actually very complicated.
- A new tender for delivering bike hangers was currently being finalised and would be delivered in the near future.
- Consultation for all new controlled parking zones would include options for electric charging points and bike hangers.
- The Council received regular complaints about inconsiderate cycling. Officers had commissioned an awareness campaign in one part of the borough to encourage people to cycle more considerately.
- Work was being carried out to ensure that dockless cycle services were managed effectively in future.
- The design standards for cycle superhighways were implemented to encourage considerate cycling. Cycle superhighway four (due to be constructed across the north of the borough) would have a high level of design quality.
- There was currently a bid in place for funding to create a new greenway in the north of the borough.
- Officers would consider how cycling infrastructure could be improved in less well served areas, including Forest Hill.
- Cycling on the pavement was illegal. The Council could never have a policy that encouraged cycling on the pavement.
- Segregating cycle routes was expensive and difficult to implement. Each area required its own solution to enable cycling.

5.3 **Resolved:** that the report be noted.

## 6. **Catford Town Centre regeneration: masterplan update**

6.1 Kplom Lotsu (Service Group Manager, Capital Programmes) introduced the report, the following key points were noted:

- The last update to the Committee (in September) focused on the realignment of the South Circular, this update provided additional details about the masterplanning process as well as the engagement, meanwhile use and the Broadway theatre. The programme team would welcome comments from the Committee about the masterplanning process.
- Transport for London (TfL) were working on plans for the relocation of the south circular (A205) and had developed an initial timeline: work on feasibility would take place up until September 2018; concept design work until March 2019 and detailed design until February 2020 with a view to the road move happening in 2021. The expectation was that work would take place moving the road for six to nine months.

- Officers at TfL were also submitting a bid for funding for the next stage of development, the Council would find out in the next week or two whether this had been successful.

6.2 Deborah Efemini (Capital Project Manager) introduced an update on the engagement process, the following key points were noted:

- ‘Team Catford’ was a specialist team of consultants who were purposely separate from the Council. It was hoped that this separation would enable people to better relate to the team.
- The majority of the people who made up the engagement team lived in Catford.
- The engagement officially started in March 2017.
- In the next stage of the consultation the team would feedback what people had been saying.
- There had been some concerns about the online focus of the Commonplace platform – but people were also proactively coming to engagement monthly engagement meetings to discuss their thoughts about the future of Catford in person.
- Fliers about the engagement would be delivered to all homes in Catford.
- Team Catford was also measuring sentiment on social media about Catford.
- There were a number of place making activities happening, including the painting of murals around the town centre and the refurbishment of the Catford dog track signage as well as plans for a ‘wall of fame’ of the top 20 most famous people from Catford.
- The Catford Broadway monthly market and the Catford Canteen (originally started in 2015 as part of the Mayor of London’s outer London fund) would be revived.

6.3 Kplom Lotsu, Deborah Efemini, Jessie Lea and Sarah Walsh responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- A heritage lottery bid was going to be submitted by the programme team alongside officers in the Council’s culture division. The submission of the bid hinged on a conservation management plan being completed, this was being worked on at present.
- The conservation and management plan would set out how the theatre should physically be maintained and managed as well as how it should be understood culturally and historically. The plan would also help to set out options for a sustainable future for the theatre.
- Until the conservation management plan was finished a bid could not be submitted to the heritage lottery fund. The plan should be finished in the next two months, after which work would be taken forward to submit the bid.
- A list of existing studies carried out in Catford would be provided as part of the masterplanning brief.
- Expert advice was being sought on creating a programme of phasing for the masterplanning process. It was recognised that the retail environment was changing and the programme for developing the masterplan had to be carefully managed.
- Options for a pedestrian bridge across the A205 had previously been considered by TfL but the likely costs of the idea had been prohibitive.
- A structural survey had been commissioned to investigate required improvements for the old conservative club building that housed the Catford constitutional club.
- Officers were aware of the requirement to ensure that companies operating in Catford were sustainable.

6.4 In the Committee's discussion, the following key points were also noted:

- The Broadway theatre should be given greater prominence in the masterplanning process.
- The work on the future plans for the Broadway theatre should be accelerated.
- Members had some concerns about programming at the theatre. There had been a recent instance of lots of people parking inconsiderately along the Catford Broadway. There had also been at least one instance of people serving food on the street outside the theatre.
- The growth of online shopping was a major rival to high street shopping.
- Team Catford should engage with young people, including the young Mayor and their advisors.
- There should also be efforts to engage with people who were less economically active.
- The social impact of retailers and prospective retailers in the current Catford shopping centre should be considered as part of the Catford shopping centre company's forward planning.
- Further consideration should be given to the inclusion of a wide pedestrian and cycling bridge across the A205 from Plassy Island towards the Catford stations.
- The Committee believed that companies renting space in Catford should be encouraged to pay the London Living Wage.

6.5 **Resolved:** The Committee believes that the joint oversight of theatre operations and plans for its future should be brought under the remit of a single senior manager. The Committee has been encouraged by the Catford programme team's accomplishments and abilities and as such, the Committee believes that serious consideration should be given to moving future management and forward planning for the theatre under the remit of the capital programmes division.

## 7. **Response to the Mayor of London's draft environment strategy**

7.1 **Resolved:** The Committee noted the report from officers and endorsed the efforts to ensure that the Bakerloo line was extended into Lewisham to Catford and beyond.

## 8. **Select Committee work programme**

8.1 The Committee discussed the work programme for its meeting on 14 December. The following key points were noted:

- The planning update on section 106 and CIL should include information about the amount of funds clawed back from developers who had made increased profits on developments and therefore had a greater liability under planning obligations.
- Information should be included about the mechanism for spending section 106 and CIL funds.
- An item would be added to the agenda on the Catford regeneration – in order to update on the next steps for the housing zone.
- An update on waste and recycling would be included on the agenda for January.

8.2 **Resolved:** that the report be noted and that the revised work programme for the meeting on 14 December be agreed.

## 9. **Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

9.1 **Resolved:** that the Committee's views under item six be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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