

# **MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 25 October 2016 at 7.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Bill Brown, Amanda De Ryk, James-J Walsh, Eva Stamirowski, Pat Raven and Paul Upex and Alan Hall

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Suzannah Clarke, Mark Ingleby and Pauline Morrison

**ALSO PRESENT:** Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer), Christopher Howard (Environmental Protection Officer), Kplom Lotsu (SGM Capital Programmes) and Emma Talbot (Head of Planning)

## **1. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2016**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September be agreed as an accurate record.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Walsh declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item four, as a resident of Catford.

## **3. Responses to referrals**

Resolved: that the responses from Mayor and Cabinet be noted.

## **4. Housing action zones**

Kplom Lotsu (SGM Capital Programmes) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- The officers' report is intended to provide an update on the two housing zones in Lewisham (New Bermondsey and Catford) as well as a broad overview of what housing zones are.
- Housing zones are intended to boost housing supply in London by unlocking and accelerating housing delivery through a range of planning and financial measures. The Government and GLA made £400m available for an initial twenty zones. Half of this money was for loans to private sector organisations only. The other half was available in different funding forms, including grants.
- Prospective housing zones must demonstrate how they meet a number of eligibility criteria. This includes that it must have a minimum of 750 housing units; the majority must be on brownfield land; it must refer to how good design will be achieved; and it must demonstrate an expeditious delivery of housing.
- The New Bermondsey housing zone has been allocated in principle funding of £20m. The GLA has also agreed to make a grant of £12m to fund a new overground station at Surrey Canal Road. The idea is that this would allow any money that was previously going to be spent on the station to be spent on more affordable housing within the scheme. The exact levels of affordable housing are currently being negotiated as part of a revised s106 agreement for the scheme.

- The Catford housing zone has been allocated £30m – £27.2m for affordable housing, £1.3m to improve rail station arrival space, and £1.5m for flood alleviation work.
- The next stage for Catford is for the council to enter into an Overarching Borough Agreement with the GLA. This is a formal acceptance of the general principles of the housing zone grant. It does not, however, set out anything on the levels of affordable housing. The stage after that will be for the council and GLA to enter into individual Borough Intervention Agreements on each part of the scheme. These will set out levels of affordable housing, but this could take a while as they are dependent on planning applications going through first.
- In the meantime, the GLA and the council have identified a number of projects that can be carried out as soon as possible. This includes work to improve the arrival spaces of the Catford stations and work to reduce the risk of flooding in Catford town centre.

Kplom Lotsu (SGM Capital Programmes) and Emma Talbot (Head of Planning) answered questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The council owns most of the land that makes up the Catford housing zone. But as some housing will be built on land that isn't council-owned, officers are not yet certain of the total build cost of the proposed 2,500 houses. Officers stated, however, that the council is not bound to providing this number of homes. This was an indicative number used when applying for funding. More certain numbers will emerge as the scheme progresses to the planning stages.
- In terms of housing density and height the Council are looking at the higher end of the land planning density threshold – and looking at buildings of medium height, around 10 stories on average. Officers noted, however, that there is still room for negotiation with the GLA. The council is not yet committed to any specific plans – they are just coming to an agreement on the principles of the housing zone.
- As the GLA are currently oversubscribed for housing zones, they are reviewing grants and, where schemes are not progressing quickly enough, there is a risk of some grant money being taken back.
- The GLA expects around 35% of housing in housing zones to be affordable – according to various definitions. Lewisham are aiming for “genuinely affordable”, although officers stated that the overall number of homes will go down the more affordable housing there is. The council is looking at a range of possible partners for the Catford scheme.
- In New Bermondsey, the agreements on housing will apply whoever delivers the scheme – including, for example, if the developer contract was to be sold on to someone else. If a new developer was to want to renegotiate any part of the agreement there would need to be a new planning application.
- Any renegotiated s106 agreement could be delegated to the Head of Planning, with the potential of being called in and going to the Strategic Planning Committee.
- The money freed up by the GLA's decision to provide £12m grant funding for station work in New Bermondsey will go into additional affordable housing. The council would expect a range of home sizes, including family homes, to be part of the scheme. A condition of the housing zone is to get the station and other infrastructure in place before housing.

The Committee made a number of comments. The following key points were noted:

- The Committee noted the possibility of station work being completed as a “quick win”, but queried whether we can be sure that this will fit in with what we are going to want and need in the long-run, once the housing parts are also complete.
- The Committee noted the interest rates being applied to developer loans and queried whether any future change in these could affect the scheme and amount of housing possible.
- The Committee expressed concern that there are many things being agreed before there is sufficient detail on the scale and design of the scheme. The committee said there are still unanswered questions on the south circular, the theatre, and the Bakerloo line extension, and expressed concern that the council will end up committed to a number of homes, of a certain height, with little room for negotiation.
- The Committee expressed concern about the possibility of the developer contract in New Bermondsey being sold on. The Committee was concerned that any new developer would likely want to renegotiate parts of the agreement meaning that there would have to be a new, lengthy planning application process.
- The Committee recommended that both housing zones should reflect the housing need of the borough and that residents should be involved in meaningful consultation.
- The Committee also recommended that the Strategic Planning Committee should have oversight of the new s106 agreement for the New Bermondsey housing zone.

Resolved: the Committee noted the report and agreed to make the following referral to Mayor and Cabinet:

*The committees recommend that Mayor and Cabinet seeks assurances from officers about key parts of the housing zones programme before proceeding with any further decision making. This should include:*

- *The maximum height of any towers proposed in the Catford development as well as further details about the anticipated massing of the development.*
- *A commitment that the level of affordable housing in both housing zones will reflect housing need in the borough. The committees believe that guarantees should be sought on the minimum amount of social housing that will be provided as part of the Catford development.*
- *Reassurance from TfL that a decision will be taken to realign the south circular in Catford in order to enable the redevelopment of the town centre.*
- *Assessment of the implications for public services in Catford, including likely pressures on transport, health services and schools.*
- *Timings of planned key decisions for the development of the programme.*
- *A commitment to clear and meaningful consultation with local councillors and residents – which aligns with the anticipated programme of key decisions.*

*The committee's also requested details of the proposed governance arrangements for future development of Catford, including the plans for non-executive oversight and the meaningful engagement of the public in the future of the scheme.*

*In relation to the New Bermondsey housing zone, the committees recommend that:*

- *Oversight of the section 106 agreement should be returned to strategic planning committee.*
- *An explanation should be sought from Renewal about its reasons for not making the New Bermondsey housing zone bid public.*
- *That further information should be made publicly available about the management structure and ownership of the developer.*

*The Chairs of the two committees also intend to write to the Mayor of London expressing concern about housing zones and the amount of affordable housing being provided. They will also request further assurances from the GLA that the necessary due diligence is being carried out on the use of housing zone funding by developers.*

## **5. Air quality action plan**

Christopher Howard (Environmental Protection Officer) introduced the report, the following key points were noted:

- The Council's air quality action plan would be considered by Mayor and Cabinet at the meeting on 7 December.
- The action plan set out the measures the Council would put in place to improve air quality in Lewisham's air quality management area (most of the north of the borough and areas adjacent to major roads in the south).
- There was new guidance from the Greater London Authority (GLA) as well as changes in the reporting framework for air quality action plans, which had been incorporated into the development of the new action plan.
- Development of the plan had involved officers from across the Council.
- The appendix to the report gave details of the consultation that had taken place with stakeholders.
- A non-statutory consultation was also carried out with residents and businesses.

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

- The importance of parking in relation to air quality had been considered in the action plan.
- Feedback from the consultation highlighted issues with the cost of electric vehicles and accessibility of charging points.
- There were currently 10 Source London (the main provider of publicly available charging points) electrical vehicle charging locations in the borough, it was intended that there would be an additional 14 charging points by March 2017.
- The location of new charging points was agreed in discussion between officers in parking, planning and highways, alongside the operator (Source London).

- The focus of the action plan was on levels of nitrogen dioxide because the pollutant exceeded limits across the borough.
- The action plan included measures to moderate the impact of new buildings and development activity on levels of emissions. It also made a priority of providing and improving green spaces in new developments.
- New developments were required to have air quality management plans. Developers were required to submit these as part of the planning process. However, it was recognised that monitoring of adherence to these plans was complicated.
- There had been a European ruling on air quality, which found against the UK government. The ruling meant that the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs had to produce a national air quality action plan. London was also required to produce a plan.
- The GLA had identified a number of 'focus areas' for action, in which it would target improvement activity and funding.
- The Mayor of London had been quite bold in setting out plans to improve air quality. The new standards for, and the expansion of, the low emission zone were predicted to make substantial improvements to the quality of London's air.
- Lewisham had cleaner air borough status. To gain this recognition, the Council had to demonstrate that there was commitment by the Council's leadership to improving air quality.
- There were three continuous air quality monitoring sites in the borough (in the south, centre and north of the borough). There were also 30 nitrogen dioxide monitoring tubes in different locations around the borough (a number were in close proximity to schools).
- The 20mph speed limit on borough roads would reduce pollution by improving the flow of traffic.

The Committee made a number of comments. The following key points were noted:

- The Committee had carried out work exploring the potential of changes to the built environment to help filter air pollution and improve air quality.
- There was concern about the level of influence the Council could have on the issues of air quality, given that it was much larger and more significant than the geographic limits of any single borough.
- The cost of electric cars was prohibitive to many residents.
- The location of electric vehicle charging points had the potential to be controversial if it reduced the availability of parking.

Resolved: that the Committee refer its views on this item to Mayor and Cabinet.

## **6. Select Committee work programme**

Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report; in the discussion that followed, these key points were noted:

- The Committee would receive an update on the implementation of the air quality action plan in May 2017 (or shortly after).
- The Chairs of planning committees would be invited to the Committee's meeting on 29 November.

- The Committee wanted to consider how emerging planning policy considerations would affect future decision making.
- Members wanted to understand whether work could be done to amalgamate the Council's different enforcement activities, to include planning.

Resolved: to agree the work programme, subject to the amendments discussed.

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

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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