

Minutes of the Sustainable Development Select Committee

Tuesday, 15 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Louise Krupski (Vice-Chair), Obajimi Adefiranye, Suzannah Clarke, Eva Stamirowski and James-J Walsh, Bill Brown and Sophie Davis

Also present: Councillor Mark Ingleby, Councillor John Paschoud, Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Acting Chief Finance Officer), Suki Binjal (Director of Law, Governance & HR), Charlotte Dale (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Deborah Efemini (Capital Project Manager), Tom McCourt (Interim Director of Public Realm), Paul Moore (Interim Director for Regeneration and Place), Katharine Nidd (Strategic Procurement and Commercial Services Manager), David Syme (Strategic Planning Manager), Emma Talbot (Director of Planning) and Sarah Walsh (Regeneration and Urban Design Programme Manager)

1. Confirmation of the Chair and Vice-Chair

- 1.1. Resolved: that Councillor Liam Curran be Chair of the Committee and that Councillor Louise Krupski be Vice-Chair.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020

- 2.1. Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

3. Declarations of interest

- 3.1. Councillor Curran declared an interest as a member of the Baring Trust (which has been involved in setting up the Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan – and in the issues surrounding the creation of the Railway Children Urban National Park)
- 3.2. Councillor Suzannah Clarke declared an interest as a member of the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum.
- 3.3. Councillor Walsh declared interests in relation to item 6 (Catford town centre regeneration) as a resident of Catford; founder of the Catford Society and founder of Rushey Green Community Group.
- 3.4. Councillor Ingleby declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 5 (Railway Children Urban National Park: neighbourhood plans and environmental protection) as the Chair of Grove Park Nature Reserve.
- 3.5. Resolved: that declarations from councillors be noted.

4. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

- 4.1. Resolved: that the response from Mayor and Cabinet be noted.

5. Railway Children urban national park': neighbourhood plans and environmental protection

This item was considered following the declarations of interests (item 3).

5.1. Councillor Mark Ingleby was invited to address the Committee. He outlined a number of issues relating to the protection of the Railway Children Urban National Park initiative and green spaces in and around Grove Park.

5.2. Emma Talbot (Director of Planning) and David Syme (Strategic Planning Manager) responded to questions from the Committee on the following key issues:

- The importance of the Grove Park the nature reserve – and the shared aspiration to protect the reserve and promote the urban national park initiative.
- Designation of the areas in question as ‘metropolitan open land’ (the equivalent of green belt in London) providing protection against inappropriate development (alongside two existing area tree protection orders and site of important nature conservation status) as well as a pending a local nature reserve designation.
- Pressures on the amount of time and the resources available to prioritise landscape and tree protection orders alongside officers’ other statutory duties.
- Incorporation of principles from the Grove Park neighbourhood plan into the development of the local plan.
- The outline timetable for the adoption of the Grove Park neighbourhood plan (and other neighbourhood plans).
- Potential use of neighbourhood community infrastructure levy funding and delays caused by the response to the pandemic.
- The interactions between Network Rail and the Council over destructive works carried out in the vicinity of the Grove Park nature reserve.
- The complexity of the issues involved and that the large area covered which comprised of land in different ownership.

5.3. Members expressed concerns about the actions of developers in the Grove Park area in damaging green areas and the natural environment.

5.4. The Chair of the Committee thanked officers for their work on proposing the local nature reserve designation for the Grove Park Nature reserve.

5.5. Resolved: that the Committee would refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows –

Recommendation 1: Hither Green sidings SINC case study

5.6. The Committee recommends that the Council should update 2015/2016 site of importance for nature conservation (SINC) review with a biodiversity action plan to include the priority habitats of wet-woodland for Hither Green Sidings SINC in time for its inclusion in the Local Plan.

Recommendation 2. Woodland and area tree protection orders

5.7. The Committee recommends putting in place a woodland TPO in the enclosed area inside the Nature Reserve *(this a privately owned site in the south east corner of the nature reserve adjoining Railway Children Walk)*, to ensure the many saplings and young trees are given a chance

to succeed into a mature woodland; and an area TPO on the triangular site behind the Ringway Centre to protect the established trees amongst the mosaic scrubland, to avoid the extinction of habitats and species across Grove Park Nature Reserve SINC as well as – especially in their subsequent recording in the Local Plan – making it clear that ecological lapses will not be tolerated and underlining the strength of the ecological corridor and its role in establishing an Urban National Park.

Recommendation 3: Protection of ecological corridor along railway line from South Circular to Chinbrook Meadows and the borough boundary

- 5.8. The Committee recommends that a survey for the implementation of a Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMI) be carried out along the entire corridor to protect wet woodland, chalk grassland, rivers, ponds and ancient woodland and all other green sites.

Recommendation 4: Delay in the Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan examination date.

- 5.9. The Committee recommends that the Council should agree re-designation immediately and set date for examination for the Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan to gain material weight.

6. Catford Town Centre regeneration

This item was considered after item 7.

- 6.1. Paul Moore (Interim Director for Regeneration and Place) introduced the item. Sarah Walsh (Regeneration and Urban Design Programme Manager) and Deborah Efemini (Capital Project Manager) gave a presentation (appended to the minutes) outlining the development process for the Catford Town Centre framework.

- 6.2. Paul Moore, Sarah Walsh and Deborah Efemini responded to questions from the Committee on the following key issues:

- The certainty around the funding from the Greater London Authority.
- Funding from Transport for London for the road realignment.
- The diversity of the Catford team and its approach to engagement.
- The plans for the re-purposing of funding from the Catford footbridge scheme to the station links project.
- Proposals to improve cycling infrastructure.

- 6.3. Resolved: that the Committee would refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows –

- The Committee endorses the recommendations in both reports to Mayor and Cabinet.
- The Committee commends the work of officers in securing good growth funding for the Catford station links programme and it acknowledges the quality of projects that have been devised.
- The Committee recommends that there should be a strategy for the long term regeneration of the Broadway theatre – incorporating proposals for National Lottery heritage funding.

- The Committee asks that the management structure of the Catford programme (with information about roles and responsibilities) should be made available.

7. Financial stabilisation - budget update and medium term plan

This item was considered after item 5.

7.1. Katherine Nidd (Strategic Procurement and Commercial Services Manager) introduced the report noting the financial challenges facing the Council and on-going levels of uncertainty. Four areas of particular challenge are: the impact of ongoing pandemic (both in the immediate and longer term); in-year over spending impact and the pressures on budgets due to increased demand and population change; uncertainty surrounding public funding and finance (particularly in relation to the comprehensive spending review and the local government finance settlement, fair funding review and business rates review); the health of the broader economy, which is facing recession and Brexit uncertainties.

7.2. Katherine Nidd and Tom McCourt (Interim Director for Public Realm) responded to questions from the Committee on the following key issues:

- In-year management action being taken to control overspending.
- The risk of the Council being placed into special measures.
- Work that is taking place to ensure that no single service bears the brunt of cuts.

7.3. Resolved: that the report be noted.

8. Select Committee work programme

8.1. The Committee discussed its annual work programme.

8.2. Resolved: that following a vote regarding the content of the November meeting – in which two councillors were in favour of adding an item on emergency planning to the agenda and two councillors were in favour of adding an item on the Council’s support for businesses disrupted by the pandemic – an item on business support be added to the November meeting (the vote being carried by the casting vote of the Chair) and that the work programme for the year be agreed (subject to prioritisation and amendment during the course of the year).

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chair:

Date:
