

Minutes of the Sustainable Development Select Committee

Monday, 27 June 2022 at 7.00 pm

In attendance: Councillors James Royston (Chair), Edison Huynh (Vice-Chair), Liam Curran, Sian Eiles, Aisha Malik-Smith, Oana Olaru and Mark Ingleby (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny)

Also joining the meeting virtually: Councillors Tauseef Anwar and Ese Erheriene

Also present: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager)

Also present virtually: Patrick Dubeck (Director of Inclusive Regeneration), David Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), Marcus Gayle (Flood Risk Manager), Kplom Lotsu (Head of Capital Programme Delivery), Petra Marshall (Senior Programme Manager), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive), Dr Catherine Mbema (Director of Public Health), Martin O'Brien (Climate Resilience Manager) and Dr Eliane Scholastiq Foteu Madio (Air Quality Officer)

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972

1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

- 1.1 **Resolved:** that Councillor James Royston be Chair of the Committee and that Councillor Edison Huynh be Vice-Chair of the Committee.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022

- 2.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

3. Declarations of interest

- 3.1 Councillor Curran declared an interest as a Trustee/Director of the Baring Trust (which is managing a £70,000 grant on behalf of the Greater London Authority).
- 3.2 Councillor Ingleby declared an interest as the Chair of the Friends of Grove Park Nature Reserve, which is involved in projects associated with the Baring Trust.

4. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

- 4.1 Councillor Curran asked that his comments on the Council's approach to offsite bio-diversity net gain be noted. Specifically, it was recommended that the approach to the Railway Children urban district park should focus on onsite biodiversity.

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

5. Flood risk management strategy

5.1 Marcus Gayle (Flood Risk Manager) introduced the report – noting Lewisham’s responsibilities as a lead local flood authority and outlining the approach that had been taken to developing and delivering the new strategy.

5.2 Marcus Gayle and Martin O’Brien (Climate Resilience Manager) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- An outline business case was being developed for flooding alleviation works on Verdant Lane.
- All options for integrating green spaces and reducing impermeable surfaces into developments would be welcomed and supported.
- Officers had contributed to the development of the Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan – with recommendations for the retrofit of sustainable drainage measures across the borough.
- The Council worked with partners to manage flood risk across borough boundaries – particularly through the South East Flood Partnership, the London Drainage Group and the Environment Agency.
- Some information was available regarding underground water sources. To further understanding of the impact of development on underground springs and water flows would require a full hydrological study.
- Proposed developments had to demonstrate how they would mitigate the impact of new building on flood risk. There were some good examples of where this had been successfully achieved.
- Planning policy required that where gardens were paved then the surface should be permeable.
- The definition of risk management authorities was defined in legislation. It was not something that Lewisham could designate or change by itself.
- There was an action in the strategy to support the implementation of small scale sustainable drainage measures and de-paving of gardens.
- The Council had an internal flooding and water management action group of officers (including those from the highways team) – which met quarterly to consider issues related to drainage and flooding.
- A full survey of all the gullies in the borough had been carried out to determine the risk of flooding and to prioritise areas for cleansing.
- Information about flooding and options for reporting flooding incidents were available on the Council’s website.
- The Environment Agency had withdrawn its flooding alleviation plans for Lewisham and Catford because it was unable to develop a viable business case using its model - some of this work had been integrated into the alleviation scheme in Beckenham Place Park.

5.3 In Committee discussions the following key points were also noted:

- Members were concerned about the potential scale of development in some parts of the borough due to the potential flooding risk. The wet woodlands site adjacent to the Hither Green sidings in the Railway Children Urban National Park was noted as one such location in particular.

- The Council should consider how best to address the issue of front gardens that had been paved over due to the potential flooding risk this posed.

5.4 **Resolved:** The Committee noted the report and agreed that the strategy should be implemented. It was also agreed that the Committee's comments be referred to Mayor and Cabinet as follows –

- The Committee recommends that Mayor and Cabinet should consider the options and resource implications of commissioning a comprehensive survey of underground water sources and streams in the borough. The Committee acknowledges the constrained financial situation facing the Council and it encourages Mayor and Cabinet to consider innovative and collaborative approaches to implementing this recommendation.
- The Committee would welcome additional education and outreach on the issues related to homeowners paving their gardens. This should include updated information on the Council's website about the potential impacts of replacing gardens and green spaces with impermeable paving.

6. Air Quality Action Plan 2022-27

6.1 Dr Catherine Mbema (Director of Public Health) introduced a presentation (appended to the minutes) which set out the key issues relating to air quality in the borough as well as the process for developing, and consulting on, the action plan.

6.2 Dr Mbema, Dr Eliane S Foteu Madio (Air Quality Officer) and David Edwards (Environmental Health Manager) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- The consultation was primarily carried out online due to the restrictions in place due to COVID-19. Officers would like to have done more face to face events.
- The level of response to the consultation was similar to those carried out by other councils.
- A number of responses from the low traffic neighbourhood consultation were also included in the air quality consultation.
- It was recognised that respondents to the consultation were not representative of Lewisham's population.
- Further work would take place engaging with the community about the health impacts of poor air quality. It was intended that this would enable deeper engagement with a broader range of residents.
- Officers in environmental health and the climate resilience team worked closely together.
- There were challenges in sourcing and powering large electric vehicles for use by the Council. Work was taking place to lower emissions from the existing fleet.
- The numbers of new electric vehicle charging points that would be installed in the future would be depend on the available funding.
- The Council's planning department used planning policy to improve the installation of electric vehicle charging points.
- The Greater London Authority set out the structure for air quality action plans across London.

- Work was taking place with officers in the parking team – who had responsibility for enforcing the Council’s anti-idling measures.
- Plans were in place to develop more monitoring options and techniques. The use of diffusion tubes for air quality monitoring was standard practice.
- Air quality champions had been recruited initially from parent groups. Work would take place to ensure that champions were from as wide a range of residents as possible.
- Further work would take place to engage young people with the implementation of the strategy.
- The targets in the action plan were limited by the availability of resources.
- The report would be amended to clarify the priority of measures in the report.
- The use of public transport/active travel would be made prominent in the engagement carried out with residents during the implementation of the strategy.

6.3 In Committee discussions the following key points were also noted:

- The Committee would welcome additional information about the expansion of monitoring in the borough. Members also requested additional information about the types of monitoring equipment in the borough.
- Members recommended that additional air quality monitoring should be carried out at identified hot spots. It was noted that this information would be incorporated in the annual monitoring report for the strategy.
- An easy read version of the strategy would be welcomed – as would additional easy access information about the measures that residents could take to improve air quality.

6.4 Councillor Louise Krupski (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate) addressed the Committee – highlighting some of the past work that had taken place on air quality campaigns in the borough. She noted that the work had been side tracked by the pandemic but that there would be a renewed energy in working on these initiatives in the coming years.

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

7. Assets update

7.1 Patrick Dubeck (Director of Inclusive Regeneration) introduced the report and presentation. Patrick provided background information (detailing numbers of Council assets) and outlining the Council’s approach to different types (community/commercial) assets as well as providing an update on the development of a new strategic asset management plan.

7.2 Patrick Dubeck, Kplom Lotsu (Head of Capital Programme Delivery) and Petra Marshall (Senior Programme Manager) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- Additional work was going to take place to update the agreements with community organisations to ensure that letting arrangements were in line with the Council's community and voluntary sector lettings policy.
- There was always a balance to be struck with assets – to ensure that the Council secured financial returns whilst also recognising the benefits of community activities, meanwhile use and additional economic benefits.
- Successful approaches to regeneration and economic development enabled a balance between different uses.
- Officers would maintain a consistent and sensitive approach to the review of the use of community assets.
- When reviewing sites as part of the asset review – officers considered four options:
 - potential for strategic service delivery;
 - redevelopment;
 - disposal to produce a capital receipt;
 - commercial rental.
- Consideration was also being given to the option for community asset transfer.
- Development was planned for the place Ladywell site in two separate phases – the first had been agreed and the second was subject to additional feasibility work.
- Options were being considered for development of the Willow Way site in Sydenham.
- Work was taking place on options for a unified system of storing records for Council assets.
- There was validity in ensuring that the Council retained an interest as a freeholder on some sites for redevelopment.
- It was difficult to measure social value. Consideration would be given to the measures in the community and voluntary sector policy as part of the strategic asset management review.
- Regular rent reviews and reviews of arrangements with community groups would become part of new leases for community groups in the future.

7.3 In Committee discussions the following key points were also noted:

- Members requested additional details about the numbers of vacant commercial properties and on facilities let to community groups on minimal rents.
- Residents welcomed the meanwhile use of vacant assets for community and creative projects.

7.4 Resolved: that the report be noted – and that the– Committee's comments to the Director of Inclusive Regeneration be summarised as follows -

- The Committee notes the role that the strategic asset management plan should play in identifying opportunities for: local economic hubs, start-ups, creative industry and meanwhile uses. It encourages officers to work with partner organisations to develop a comprehensive and collaborative approach to assets – particularly in relation to the Council's policy for local economic development.
- It was also agreed that officers would provide information about how many of the Council's assets were let on a 'peppercorn rent' and how many

were let on commercial rents – as well as - how many of those let on ‘peppercorn rents’ were delivering services deemed to be of community value and how many were commercial businesses.

8. Select Committee work programme

8.1 The Committee discussed its work programme and priorities for the year.

8.2 **Resolved:** that items on employment and recycling and refuse be added to the work programme. It was also agreed that the timing of the item on the local plan would be considered and – that Cllr Eiles would be the Committee’s climate emergency champion.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Chair:

Date:
