

# MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 30 November 2022 at 7.00 pm

In attendance: Councillors James Royston (Chair), Edison Huynh (Vice-Chair), Tauseef Anwar, Liam Curran, Sian Eiles, Oana Olaru and Mark Ingleby

Also present: Councillor James Rathbone, Councillor Louise Krupski (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate), Councillor Brenda Dacres (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Development and Planning), Seamus Adams (Head of Commercial Operations and Development), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), David Austin (Director of Finance), Jennifer Daothong (Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm), Melanie Dawson (Principal Lawyer) and Zahur Khan (Director of Public Realm)

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. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022

- 1.1 It was noted that Cllr Ingleby was at the meeting – but did not appear on the list of attendees.
- 1.2 **Resolved:** that subject to the inclusion of Cllr Ingleby as a meeting attendee – the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 There were none.

## 3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

- 3.1 There were none.

## 4. Budget reductions report

- 4.1 David Austin (Director of Finance) introduced the report – noting the changing and uncertain economic context as well as the anticipated publication of the local government finance settlement (on 21 December). He also outlined the timetable for the development and agreement of the budget. David also responded to questions regarding a number of officer savings proposals – the following key points were noted:
  - The proposal to reduce the operation costs of corporate buildings (COR\_SAV\_03) was in recognition of the reduction in usage of Council buildings and the increase in options for flexible working.
  - There was work taking place across the Council to reduce reliance on agency staff.
  - The proposal to remove the empty homes Council tax exemption (COR\_INC\_01) would likely impact on Lewisham Homes and local housing associations. The intent was to ensure that homes were being occupied as much as possible.

- There were complexities and challenges from generating income from events in parks.
- 4.2 Jennifer Daothong (Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm) introduced the savings proposals relating to road safety and traffic enforcement (HRPR\_SAV\_02 and HRPR\_INC\_01).
- 4.3 Jennifer Daothong and Zahur Khan (Director of Public Realm) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:
- Consideration was being given to restructuring the road safety team, in coordination with schools – regarding their requirements for patrols.
  - There would be a potential reduction in school crossing officers – but it was intended that measures would be considered alongside the plans for implementing schools streets and the use of physical safety measures.
  - It was intended that the work with schools (and existing crossing officers) would mitigate the potential impact of any reduction in the number of posts (as well as potential equalities impacts).
- 4.4 Jennifer Daothong introduced the savings proposals relating to fees, charges and income generation (HRPR:\_INC\_02, INC\_03, INC\_04, INC\_05 and INC\_06) noting the work that had taken place to benchmark charges against those levied by neighbouring authorities and highlighting the need for charges in some areas to reduce demand.
- 4.5 Jennifer Daothong, Zahur Khan and Seamus Adams (Head of Commercial Operations and Development) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:
- The Council had not reviewed a number of these budgets for several years.
  - The intent was to move toward full cost recovery for the delivery of the services as far as feasible – with the option for regular review.
  - A great deal of work had taken place in the past year to reduce illegal dumping of waste through the (self-financing) enforcement team.
  - Consideration was being given to the potential for increasing prosecutions for environmental crime.
  - There would not be charges for replacement bins damaged by refuse collection officers.
  - Monitoring of the levels of illegal dumping would take place – alongside regularly reviewing the level of take up of charged for refuse collection services.
  - Officers were mindful of the potential impact on the cost of living – but the charges for the items (and the irregularity of replacing mattresses and fridge freezers) were believed to be fair and proportionate.
  - Fines for fixed penalty notices were set nationally.
  - The Council issued fines for littering and for fly-tipping.
  - The duties of the Head of Strategic Transport were being incorporated into the role of Head of Highways – which, it was intended would ensure effective coordination and increased focus on implementation across the service.
- 4.6 In the Committee's discussion the following key points were also noted:

- Further work should take place to publicise the Councils approach to enforcement – both as a good news story and as a deterrent to those illegally dumping waste and littering.
- There was concern about the potential impact of increasing charges during the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- Members highlighted their concerns about proposal COM\_SAV\_08 (reduction in opening hours at libraries) – particularly in relation to the Council’s recent announcement of its warm havens programme.

4.7 **Resolved:** that the Committee would refer its views to the Public Accounts Select Committee as follows –

- In relation to the Housing Regeneration and Public Realm savings proposals for income generation (for bulky waste, fridge/freezer collection, and mattresses) Committee members were concerned about the potential impact of the increased charges on household budgets, particularly given the recent increases in the cost of living. The Committee recommended that, if feasible, work should take place to review the effect of the changes on household budgets over time.
- The Committee was also concerned about potential increases in littering and fly-tipping. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that additional emphasis, and (where feasible) increased publicity, should be placed on the Council’s enforcement processes and the options for the legal disposal of waste.
- The Committee is concerned about the proposed reduction in opening hours at libraries (COM\_SAV\_08) particularly in relation to the Council’s offer of ‘warm welcomes’ to households and vulnerable individuals experiencing fuel poverty.
- The Committee recommends that careful consideration should be given to any future proposals for income generation in the borough’s parks and open spaces.

## 5. Sustainable transport and parking improvements

5.1 Seamus Adams introduced the report – noting the Council’s intention to: reduce parking pressures; encourage walking and cycling; improve air quality and public health; reduce traffic levels; improve road safety and enhance the public realm. He highlighted that less than half of the borough’s households owned a car but only a quarter of the borough was covered by parking controls. He outlined that approach to implementation of new measures – which would be driven by data and informed by consultation and engagement with residents.

5.2 Seamus Adams and Zahur Khan responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- The measures were part of a combined package – including parking controls and street scene improvements. The improvements would be funded by a combination of parking charges and section 106 funds ring-fenced for parking improvements.

- Further consideration would be given to the emissions based charges for the least polluting diesel vehicles. Diesel vehicles in general were considered to produce more emissions and harmful particulates.
- Households were offered a number of free parking permits per year. Parking charges were benchmarked with other boroughs and were considered to be reasonable.
- Every road would have a bespoke approach to its parking controls – which would engage with the needs of businesses and residents (incorporating the need for space for deliveries).
- Consultations on the proposals would focus on what was right for residents of each road. The intention would be to consult with all residents – and not just car drivers. However, consultations would not constitute referenda on the proposals.
- In cases where there was significant opposition to making changes – it was not likely that a proposal would be made to Mayor and Cabinet to proceed with changes (although this would be considered on a case by case basis).
- Officers' experience with previous schemes indicated that once the benefits of the changes were being felt by residents in one area – they became more appealing to residents in other areas. There would be the option for areas that had declined the changes to be revisited (consulted again) towards the end of the programme.
- The consultation would be a continual learning process for officers. It would be carried out quickly and pragmatically.
- Work would take place to link the improvements through this programme with the interventions taking place to implement the transport strategy.
- An overview of the programme would be available on the Council's website to keep all residents and members up to date on progress. There would be a wide programme of engagement – that would also include engaging with ward assemblies.
- The renewal of the parking enforcement contract would provide new technology and new capabilities for effective enforcement.
- Officers would engage with neighbouring authorities to harmonise controls and reduce potential problems.
- Work would take place with planning colleagues regarding requests for dropped kerbs and the availability of on-street parking. There would also be consideration of the widening and accessibility of footways.
- Consideration would be given to issuing monthly parking permits.
- There would be multiple benefits from improving the amount of green space on the borough's streets.
- Where areas were consulted and a decision was not taken to implement improvements there would still be changes to junctions and the use of double yellow lines in order to improve safety and access.
- If the proposals were agreed – and the consultation started in 2023 – there would be options for regular reviews and amendments to the programme in order to maintain flexibility and responsiveness.
- Work was taking place with dockless bike providers to ensure that their services were being managed effectively.

- The roll out of TfL bikes would require a contribution from the Council – which would have to be reviewed in the context of current financial pressure.
- Where possible, work on cycle infrastructure would take place alongside street improvements.

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

- The Committee would welcome improved signage (including walking times) and quality footway access to public transport hubs – and train stations in particular.
- Members also emphasised the importance of using transport and mapping mobile apps for planning journeys.
- The importance of rental bikes – including both TfL and dockless bikes.

5.4 Councillor Krupski (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate) was invited to address the Committee. She noted the quality and innovation of the proposed project and emphasised the importance of maintaining clear and uncomplicated messages regarding planning, communication and delivery.

5.5 **Resolved:** the Committee recommended that (should the proposals be agreed) – work should take place to link up the improvements with other streetscape and active travel projects in a strategic way. Members believe this should take account of potential future funding (including projects funded by the local implementation plan); the Committee also recommend that partners (including TfL, dockless bike companies and neighbouring boroughs) should be encouraged to link in with the active travel improvements where possible. In addition, the Committee would welcome improved signage around railway stations in order to encourage walking and other forms of active travel.

## 6. Select Committee work programme

6.1 The Committee discussed the work programme for the January meeting – deliberating on the option to remove an item on the development of the Local Plan and the addition of an item on the redevelopment of Catford Town Centre.

6.2 **Resolved:** that the programme for the January meeting be agreed.

The meeting ended at 9:32

Chair:

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Date:

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