

MINUTES OF THE MAYOR AND CABINET

Wednesday, 10 May 2023 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Damien Egan (Mayor), Brenda Dacres, Chris Barnham, Paul Bell, Juliet Campbell, Amanda De Ryk, Louise Krupski and Kim Powell

MEMBER(S) JOINING REMOTELY:

- Councillor Sophie Davis, Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Homelessness and Community Safety; and
- Councillor James-J Walsh Culture, Cabinet Member for Leisure, and Communication (job share).

ALSO PRESENT: Monitoring Officer, Executive Director for Corporate Resources, Executive Director for Children and Young People, Housing Officials, and Senior Committee Manager.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andre Bourne.

1. Minutes

It was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 8 March 2023 were agreed.

2. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3. Matters Raised by Scrutiny and other Constitutional Bodies

3.1 Mayor, Damien Egan introduced the Item and announced that a referral together with an officer's response had been received from the Children and Young People Select Committee (CYPSC) on "Amplifying Children's Voices".

3.1.2 Speaking on the referral, Councillor Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People invited the Mayor and Cabinet to note and approve the officer's report, highlighting the following:

- That the amplification of children and young people's voices was relevant because of the significantly high number of the borough's population currently under 16, and the Council's manifesto to build on the Young Mayor's programme.
- That a working group, which included Lewisham's Young Advisers, had been set up by officers to build on the recommendations in the officer's report, with a view to bring further proposals to the Mayor and Cabinet aimed at enhancing the voices of children and young people in policy development and delivery across the spectrum of the Council's work.

3.2 The Mayor announced that another referral was received from the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee (SSCSC) relating to “Borough of Sanctuary”.

3.2.1 Councillor Liam Shrivastava, the Vice-Chair of the SSCSC addressed the meeting on the second referral, advising that at its meeting on 2 March 2023, the SSCSC received an update report on matters relating to referral. It was stated:

- That the SSCSC welcomed information that efforts had been made to reinforce the Council’s commitment by the reinstatement of a dedicated officer resource to drive the delivery of the Borough of Sanctuary strategy.
- That the SSCSC commended the work of the local voluntary and community sector to help safeguard and support sanctuary seekers in Lewisham.
- That the SSCSC endorsed the work undertaken by the Action for Refugee in Lewisham, and the Lewisham’s Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN) regarding front-line support provision, and the Safer Surgeries Campaign.

3.2.2 Councillor Shrivastava continued by stating that the SSCSC understood that the Council’s strategy as a Borough of Sanctuary was strong but felt that the delivery was not as effective as it could be. Thus, the SSCSC’s referral contained 9 recommendations which the Council could adopt if it were to meet its Borough of Sanctuary ambitions. Commenting on some of the recommendations, Councillor Shrivastava asked the meeting to note the following:

- That the SSCSC recognised restrictions and exemptions regarding to ‘no recourse to public funds’ (NRPF). Thus, the SSCSC had recommended:
 - That officers should take a proactive approach when assessing claims regarding statutory duties relating (NRPF).
 - That officers should keep lines of communication open with advocacy organisations to help anticipate issues to support sanctuary seekers, including early help for families with complex needs.
- That the SSCSC acknowledged that some of the Home Office’s policies directly contravened sanctuary principles. Thus, the SSCSC had recommended:
 - That training, like the type of the Safer Surgeries’ work undertaken with local General Practitioners would be useful to enhance knowledge and skills of front-line service staff.
- That the SSCSC felt that collaborative working would help delivery partners to share best practice and identify patterns and challenges that could present themselves in different councils. Thus, the SSCSC had recommended:
 - That the Council should appoint a person to act as a champion for migrants and refugees in Lewisham. It was stated that the

person to be appointed, in addition to acting as a critical friend to the Council and its partners, would be expected to work collaboratively with the nation-wide migrant champions' network managed by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

3.2.3 In closing, Councillor Shrivastava informed the meeting that since the recommendation was agreed for an update on the use of migration dispersal funding, the SSCSC had received and welcomed a report by the Borough of Sanctuary Manager as follows:

- That as well as using the asylum dispersal grant for funding the Council's services which asylum seekers could access, the Council was considering transferring some of the funding to further strengthen work relating to the Borough of Sanctuary strategy.

3.3 Commenting on the SSCSC's referral, Councillor Juliet Campbell, Cabinet Member for Communities, Refugees and Wellbeing expressed an appreciation to Members of the SSCSC for formulating recommendations to build on the work of the Council as a leading borough of sanctuary, and she asked the meeting to note the following:

- That the Council had produced a comprehensive action plan to progress with its work as a Borough of Sanctuary, in addition to a series of works planned across departments and with the voluntary sector.
- That discussion to recruit a Migration Champion was underway, with an expectation that the job holder would work collaboratively with the Sanctuary Officer to progress with the Borough of Sanctuary's strategy.
- That the Sanctuary Officer, since starting work in January 2023, had met objectives regarding the work which the Council was doing as a sanctuary borough. Thus, the migration dispersal fund was effectively utilised.

It was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Mayor and Cabinet

- Direct officers to explore the feasibility of adopting suggestions in paragraph 4.1 of the report made by young people who were already engaged with the Council and to report back to the Children and Young People Select Committee.
- Note comments and views of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Borough of Sanctuary strategy, and that officers should provide a formal response on the matter to Mayor and Cabinet before reporting back to the Committee.

4. Appointment of Directors to Catford Regeneration Partnership Limited

4.1 Councillor Brenda Dacres, the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Development and Planning introduced the report, with a recommendation to appoint a director for the wholly-owned council

company, Catford Regeneration Partnership Limited, otherwise known as the CRPL, following the resignation of two directors.

4.2 Councillor Dacres gave a background about the CRPL and highlighted the rationale for the proposed appointment. The following were noted:

- That the CRPL was created in January 2010 to purchase the leasehold interest in and around the Catford Centre to manage and regenerate the assets, with a view to improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of residents.
- That since the creation of CRPL, work had commenced to reinvigorate the Catford Town Centre, including the introduction of the Catford Library and the Catford Mews.
- That the appointment, as recommended, was necessary to progress with the aims of the Catford Town Centre's framework and to ensure the continued success of the CRPL.

It was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Mayor and Cabinet approve the appointment of John Bennett as Company Director to replace Zahur Khan, an officer Director who resigned from the role.

5. Approval to confirm an Article 4 Direction to withdraw permitted development rights for the change of use from dwelling house (Use class C3) to small HMO's (Use Class C4)

5.1 The meeting received an update report by Councillor Brenda Dacres, the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Development and Planning relating to the outcome of representation of making a non-immediate Article 4 Direction for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) in the remainder of the borough.

5.2 In introducing the recommendations, Councillor Dacres advised as follows:

- That under Permitted Development Rights, individuals could convert a family dwelling to a small HMO of a maximum of six individuals without a planning permission without the need of a planning application.
- That although exempt dwellings were not covered by Article 4, it should be recognised that HMOs were supporting the Council to manage its housing supplies, as they represented a legitimate form of housing in the London Plan and the Local Plan.
- That Article 4 proposals would not only enable the Council to determine if HMOs were good quality and in a suitable location but would be able help prevent concentrations in certain areas within the borough. Thus, 81% of respondents who made representations were supportive of the proposals which would require individuals to apply for HMOs as part of the Council's planning process alongside its licensing scheme.
- That if the recommendations were approved, the policy would come into force on 19 January 2024, which would be 12 months after the Article 4 direction would have been published.

It was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Mayor and Cabinet considered the responses to the consultation set out in Section 5 of the report, and:

- Authorise the Director of Law and Corporate Governance to confirm the non-immediate Article 4 Direction, which removes permitted development rights from C3 Dwelling Houses to C4 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) for the remainder of the borough.
- Authorise the Director of Planning to carry out the statutory notification of the decision to confirm the Article 4 direction
- Note the legal and financial implications set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the report.

6. Tender for Council Insurances

5.1 The meeting received an update report by Councillor Brenda Dacres, the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing Development and Planning relating to the outcome of representation of making a non-immediate Article 4 Direction for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) in the remainder of the borough.

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- Note the legal and financial implications set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the report.

7. Network Links - Part 1

7.1 Councillor Amanda De Ryk, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy introduced the report. She highlighted proposals for Shared Technology Services (STS) comprising London boroughs of Brent, Lewisham, and Southwark for contracts due to expire on 31 March 2024, and asked the meeting to note the following:

- That the STS would enhance digital inclusion through the provision of network connections to the Council's multiple sites for internet access.
- That because of the proposals, the Council would achieve economies of scale by having a single contract, as opposed to current arrangements for two contracts.
- That in addition to benefits of some free-of-charge broadband lines to deliver connectivity to remote sites, further discussions and negotiations were underway between the Council's officers and the provider, London Grid for Learning Trust, about what they could provide from a social value perspective in respect of delivering the contract.

7.2 In closing, Councillor De Ryk informed the meeting that the Council was reviewing its policies, with a view to reassess how it would secure wider social value in its commissioning arrangements across departments, and a report on the matter would be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet in due course.

It was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Mayor and Cabinet:

- Approve Brent entering into the contract with London Grid for Learning Trust for a period of five years, commencing 1 April 2023, on behalf of the Council.
- Approve the expenditure of up to a maximum value of £600,000 for the Lewisham element of the contract.

8. Exclusion of Press and Public

All closed (Part 2) reports were considered alongside their open (Part 1) counterparts, therefore there was no need to exclude the Press and Public.

9. Network Links - Part 2

Considered alongside item 7.

