

# Minutes of the Sustainable Development Select Committee

Tuesday, 11 October 2022 at 7.00 pm

In attendance: Councillors James Royston (Chair), Edison Huynh (Vice-Chair), Tauseef Anwar, Sian Eiles, Aisha Malik-Smith and Oana Olaru

Apologies: Councillor Liam Curran

Also present: Councillor Louise Krupski (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Michael Forrester (Head of Development Management) and Emma Talbot (Director of Planning)

Also present virtually: Councillor Brenda Dacres, Seamus Adams and Kenny Wilks

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 27 June 2022

1.1 Members discussed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2022 – and requested that the following amendments be made:

- That the minute of item 6 (air quality action plan) should include a note of the Committee's question about the differences between -and distribution of- air quality monitoring devices in the borough (following the meeting, officers provided additional mapping of monitoring locations in the borough).
- That the minute of item 7 (assets update) reflect the request for information regarding the Council's commercial assets, specifically: 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.

1.2 **Resolved:** that subject to the clarifications requested – the minutes of the meeting be agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were none.

## 3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

3.1 **Resolved:** that the response from Mayor and Cabinet be noted.

## 4. Local democracy review: planning update

4.1 Michael Forrester (Head of Development Management) introduced the report setting out a brief summary of the local democracy review process and the proposed amendment of the statement of community involvement. In particular – it was noted that the current statement of community involvement had been in place since 2006 and was no longer considered fit for purpose.

4.2 Michael Forrester and Emma Talbot (Director of Planning) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- The statement of community involvement would set out how residents and communities would be consulted on planning applications.
- The development of the new document would include engagement with members - and with the planning community forum (which met quarterly).
- Consultation would last for a minimum of six weeks.
- Officers wanted to include an expectation that for major developments, the public should be involved at a stage that they could have a meaningful impact on a scheme rather than after it had been submitted.
- It was intended that communities would be involved when developers were putting together plans - rather than when work has already been started.
- It was planned that early engagement would ensure that there was more transparency in the planning process.
- Since the adoption of the last statement of community involvement there had been a noticeable increase in the number of people who were interested in planning decisions in their local areas.
- There were no current agreements about how amenity societies should be constituted, managed and recognised.
- At present amenity societies could request that planning decisions be taken by a committee (rather than delegated to officers). Through the revised process - it was proposed that there be a formal designation for amenity societies and a clearer distinction between comments and 'call-ins' from societies. This would also clarify which amenity societies had call in powers for which areas.
- The ambition also was that amenity societies should be reflective of their communities (as had been proposed in the Democracy Review)
- The statement of community involvement would set out the process for smaller and larger schemes; there would be measures related to the formal agreements for larger planning proposals and the anticipated requirements in place for bigger developers on major schemes
- Ward assemblies were not included in the list of amenity societies
- The planning service engaged closely with ward assemblies - and provided updates for a broader range of groups, as required.
- Previously, there had been a fortnightly forum for amenity societies to meet with officers and review all of the upcoming planning permissions. Due to officer workloads and the significant increase in planning applications - it was not proposed that this should be continued and it had not operated for some years.
- The planning community forum provided a space for a range of constituted community groups to engage with the planning service on thematic issues.

- The work on the statement of community involvement would not change the number or composition of planning committees – or the thresholds for calling in decisions. There was a parallel process taking place (being led by the Director of Law, Governance and Elections) reviewing the constitution.
  - Officers had considered statements of community involvement from other London authorities – Lewisham had the oldest
  - Lewisham’s statement of community involvement reflected elements of the Council’s constitution – which made it relatively inflexible. It was proposed that repetition should be avoided
- 4.3 In the Committee’s discussion – the following key point was also noted:
- Members emphasised the importance of engaging with residents in wards in which there weren’t any amenity societies.
- 4.4 **Resolved:** that the report be noted – and that as part of the development of the next stage of the proposals for the revision of the statement of community involvement - officers should take the Committee’s comments into consideration as follows:
- The Committee believes that further work should take place to consider how best to represent and consult ward assemblies and other community groups that are interested in their local areas – but not specifically focuses on planning/conservation.
  - That this work should consider how to engage with seldom heard groups.
  - The Committee also believes that the process for determining the validity, formal status and level of representation of amenity groups should be as transparent and open as possible. The Committee would welcome further information about the ways in which the Council will determine the representativeness of groups (in the planned future report to Committee).

## 5. Environmental crime enforcement team

- 5.1 Seamus Adams (Head of Commercial Operations and Development) introduced the report alongside a presentation (included with the agenda pack). Seamus provided an overview of the progress that had been made on tackling environmental crime and set out the next steps for the development of the service.
- 5.2 Seamus Adams responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:
- Further information would be provided regarding the ‘hot spots’ for fly tipping in the borough and the locations of CCTV cameras.
  - Work was taking place in Lewisham Town Centre to tackle illegal dumping and issues caused at the end of the market day. A dedicated officer had been employed to lead on this work.
  - There was a difference between the collection rate for parking fines and fixed penalty notices for fly tipping. Parking contraventions had been decriminalised – so the Council could purse fines directly. For fly tipping

offences – the Council had to take cases to court. Therefore, the Council carefully decided which cases to escalate.

- Consideration was being given to increasing the number of cases being taken to court – and on publicising successful prosecutions to deter potential fly-tippers.
- Lewisham’s collection rate for fixed penalty notices was comparable with other London authorities.
- Officers were considering new approaches to dealing with trade waste - including time-banding for businesses to put out their refuse (specified times when it was acceptable to leave waste on the pavements – and enforcement activity outside of those times).
- Time banding collections were also going to be trialled for residents in flats – which would enable more effective enforcement action against illegal dumping.
- Work was taking place with businesses to ensure that they were aware of their responsibilities – and the commercial services provided by the Council.
- It was recognised that commercial waste services had not been functioning as efficiently as they should and improvement work was taking place.
- There were new managers in place in the environment division who were working to improve services and build on successes.
- Further information would be provided on waiting times for bulky waste collection
- There had been a national shortage of bins – which had led to delays in delivering replacements.
- Work took place with estate agents and landlords to highlight waste collection and enforcement processes.
- The level of signage warning about penalties for fly-tipping had been increased across the borough as part of a wider campaign of communication to deter fly-tipping.
- The Council’s first line of action was to educate and inform – and to follow up with enforcement if this failed.
- Information was collected about the weight of waste collected from the streets. Further work would take place to analyse this information and anticipated changes over time.

5.3 In the Committee’s discussion the following key points were also noted:

- Members welcomed the report and presentation as well as the work that was being carried out by the service.
- The importance of clear and consistent communication with residents and businesses.
- That there were always concerns and complaints raised by residents regarding fly-tipping – but there had also been a recent noticeable increase in compliments.

5.4 Councillor Louise Krupski (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate) addressed the Committee – thanking officers for their hard work and commending the success of the programme.

**5.5 Resolved:** that the report be noted – and that further information would be provided regarding: the fly tipping ‘hot spots’ in the borough; heat mapping and waiting times for bulky waste collection.

**6. Select Committee work programme**

6.1 The Committee discussed the work programme. It was agreed that an update on the cost of living crisis and warm havens being prepared for Healthier Communities Select Committee would be circulated to members.

6.2 **Resolved:** that the agenda for the meeting on 30 November be agreed.

The meeting ended at: 21:00

Chair:

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Date:

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