

Minutes of the Sustainable Development Select Committee

Thursday, 18 July 2024 at 7.00 pm

In attendance: Councillors James Royston, Sian Eiles, Tauseef Anwar, Liam Curran, Jack Lavery and Luke Warner

Also present: Councillor Pauline Dall, Councillor Mark Ingleby, Councillor James-J Walsh (Cabinet Member for Inclusive Regeneration and Planning), Seamus Adams (Head of Commercial Operations and Development), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Zahur Khan (Director of Public Realm), Martha Lauchlan (Transport Planner) and James Lee (Director of Community Services)

Also present virtually: Councillor Rudi Schmidt (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny), Councillor Louise Krupski (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Climate Action), Petra Marshall (Senior Programme Manager) and Sakthi Suriyaprakasam (Head of Culture and Community Development)

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 the Chair and Vice-Chair

- 1.1 **Resolved:** that Councillor Royston be agreed as Chair and that Councillor Eiles be Vice-Chair of the Select Committee.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

- 2.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March be agreed as an accurate record.

3. Declarations of interest

- 3.1 Councillor Mark Ingleby declared an interest in relation to item six as trustee of Goldsmiths Community Centre (which is on Council owned land)
- 3.2 Councillor Liam Curran declared an interest in relation to item six as trustee of a community building owned by the Council.

4. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

- 4.1 There were none.

5. Active travel and sustainable streets

- 5.1 Seamus Adams (Head of Commercial Operations and Development) introduced the report – noting the strategic programme to improve active travel in the borough. Seamus highlighted the funding available for this work as well as recent key milestones in the delivery of both active travel and sustainable streets programmes.

- 5.2 Seamus Adams and Zahur Khan (Director of Public Realm) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:
- Parking permit income from sustainable street schemes would be allocated to the implementation, operation, and ongoing maintenance of the streetscape improvements.
 - The current sustainable street scheme was premised on the implementation of controlled parking zones – it had been enhanced subsequently to implement street improvements and new facilities for streets that adopted the measures.
 - If funding for public realm improvements became available in future – then the Council would use this for general streetscape improvements. However, the funding from the sustainable streets programme was ring fenced to fund and maintain improvements.
 - A programme for electric vehicle charging was being considered for the whole borough.
 - Measures were being considered to enable residents to pay for parking permits in instalments.
 - Areas that were having their controlled parking zones reviewed would be offered the same measures as those areas having newly implemented schemes.
 - One of the aims of the programme was to ensure that footways were clear for all road users.
 - The programme would evolve over time – as would the timescale for consultations and implementation. It was likely that there would be displacement effects from the implementation of new schemes – which would require new consultations and changes the boundaries of controlled parking zones.
 - It was recognised that engagement with ward councillors was an important part of the consultation process.
 - Consideration would be given to the implementation of signage to support active travel and interchanges between active travel modes.
 - A number of issues had been raised about the implementation of dockless bike hire. A programme of new ‘geo-fencing’ was currently being implemented.
 - Figures from Lime bikes indicated that there was an exponential growth in the numbers of Lime bike users.
 - The dockless bike hire roll out would be adapted depending on future usage and demand.
 - The Council’s ambition was to implement segregated cycling infrastructure wherever possible.
 - The current year’s active travel programme had the highest allocated level of funding available ever. This was due to the focused and dedicated work of the officers working in this area.
 - Once a number of the sustainable streets projects had been implemented then there would be a review of successes and data on the roll out would be made available.
 - In law, parking income was ringfenced for the highways programme and for transport related expenditure.
 - Lewisham used the income available from parking to subsidise the concessionary fares programme. The income available did not fully meet the cost of the scheme.
 - The use of the ‘Love Clean Streets App’ was having a beneficial impact on the roll out of dockless bike hire.
 - Lessons were being learnt throughout the delivery of the sustainable streets programme consultations to improve future rounds of the scheme.

- The delivery of consultations could be sped up as the programme continued to be rolled-out.
- The target for the installation of cycle hangars was on track to deliver the Council's target.
- Lots of measures were being implemented in the sustainable streets programme – which should improve the Council's position in the Healthy Streets Scorecard.
- A number of north London boroughs had full coverage of controlled parking zones – and scored better on this measure in the Healthy Streets Scorecard.
- A detailed programme for sustainable streets would be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet in the Autumn.
- Additional information would be provided to the Committee on Lime bike hire numbers, the implementation of new crossings and the extent of proposed cycling segregation in future cycling schemes.

5.3 Councillor Louise Krupski (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Climate Action) was invited to address the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- London Councils was working on a pan-London agreement for micro-mobility. This was a complex piece of work and it would require sign up from a number of authorities to be effective. However – it should allow for competition between providers and better regulation of implementation.
- The agreement would also allow for better sharing of data.
- The implementation of geo-fencing for dockless bike hire had a positive and transformative effect on the use of dockless bikes – as well as mitigating the problems associated with their parking.
- Lewisham's Healthy Streets Scorecard score was not accurate – due to the timing of the data collection for the measure. It was also heavily weighted towards the coverage of controlled parking zones.
- The Scorecard did not take into account some of the things that Lewisham was good at – including the planting of street trees and the Council's good relationship with car clubs.
- It should also be noted that Lewisham came top of the scorecard for the implementation of school streets.

5.4 **Actions**

That the following information be provided to the Committee:

- Lime bike e-bike hire numbers
- A breakdown of the costs of implementing e-bike bays
- Further information on the timing of LIP and climate action investment funded projects
- Additional information about improving or providing new crossings in the borough
- Sustainable streets impact and roll out review (in the future)

5.5 **Resolved**

To recommend that: officers consider 'Swiss style' signs (with timings indicating distances between walking/cycling locations)

6. Community Asset Policy

6.1 Petra Marshall (Senior Programme Manager) introduced the report. Petra noted the work that had been taking place between Council teams to update the Council's approach to the management of community assets. She highlighted the continued inconsistencies in the system and the weakness of a number of the agreements and tenancies with groups occupying Council assets.

6.2 Petra Marshall, James Lee (Director of Community Services) and Sakthi Suriyaprakasam (Head of Culture and Community Development) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- It was likely that there would be a mix of tenancy arrangements and repairing responsibilities with groups in future.
- There would be some groups who would be able (and willing) to take on longer leases with repairing and maintenance responsibilities. These groups might also be able to benefit from funding sources that the Council could not access.
- There would also be some groups that could be supported to develop a business case and increase their capacity to take on full responsibility for a building. The new policy had provisions to take this into account.
- It was possible that future consideration could be given to expanding the policy to include other spaces and assets owned by the Council.
- Upfront discussions were being held with groups on how access to buildings could be maintained for existing users in the most equitable way.
- There were no plans to police access to buildings on a regular basis. The process involved a transfer of assets (and management arrangements) on a long-term basis.
- Groups would be required to demonstrate how they would support community access to facilities as part of the expressions of interest process.
- There were risks involved in the new approach – which would have to be managed.
- Lease agreements would be accompanied by a set of agreed principles. There would be annual checks on the adherence to the terms of leases (the scope of these had not yet been agreed) Nonetheless, it might be difficult to demonstrate a breach of a lease due to the non-compliance with the principles.
- The skills to run a community group – and the skills to maintain and manage buildings were often quite different so a process of learning and capacity building would be needed in community groups to take on the new opportunities and challenges.
- Subject to the availability of resources, the Council might look to facilitate a forum for community groups to share knowledge and expertise related to the maintenance and management of buildings.
- The policy was designed to ensure that buildings hosting commercial businesses would be part of the commercial estate, rather than community assets.
- There was no current budget within the Community Services Directorate for repairing and maintaining community assets. The Directorate overspent by £120k-£140k per year, which had to be found from other budgets.
- As the tenants of buildings became more successful and profitable, it was intended that the rent review process would provide a source of income to the Council.

- It was difficult to predict how much income could be created from future operation of these assets.
- There was currently a programme of investment to ensure buildings were fit for purpose.
- The Council had an ongoing commitment to dialogue and engagement with groups.
- Almost half of the groups that were due to take on community assets were also in receipt of grant funding – so they had a strong relationship with the Council.
- The term ‘peppercorn rent’ was outdated. This term was used to denote an annual zero rent.

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

- Members expressed their concern about the ongoing access to community assets by a range of groups and members of all of Lewisham’s communities.
- It was recommended that a database of trusted traders be compiled for use by community groups.
- Members asked whether a small charge could be levied to support a resource within the Council to coordinate skills sharing and knowledge between community groups.

6.4 **Actions**

- That the register of community assets be provided to the Committee.

6.5 **Resolved**

To recommend:

- That officers consider convening a forum for community groups to support them with manging and maintaining their assets.
- That officers continue to implement the principles of openness and transparency in relation to discussions and negotiations around the use of assets.
- That tenants should sign up to a set of principles to ensure open access and fair operation.
- That consideration be given to whether a small increase in rates could provide a centralised capacity for coordination and support for providers.

7. **Select Committee work programme**

7.1 The Committee considered the work programme report.

7.2 **Resolved:** that the Committee’s work programme for 2024-25 be submitted for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting ended at 21:15

Chair:

Date:
