PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hall (Chair), Gareth Siddorn (Vice-Chair), Liam Curran, Brenda Dacres, Carl Handley, Jim Mallory, Hilary Moore and John Muldoon

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pauline Morrison

128. Minutes

New Bermondsey Housing Zone – OSBP Minutes 28 April 2015

Councillor Curran asked if there had been any update following a referral from Business Panel Members to the Chief Executive asking him to review all the arrangements of the scheme, and to ensure due diligence was in place. It was noted there had not been one.

Councillor Curran proposed that the Housing Select Committee, and the Sustainable Development Select Committee carry out an investigation on the Bermondsey and Catford Housing Zone projects, and this item to be added to the Select Committees work programmes, this was agreed.

Action >>>>>> Scrutiny Manager

Council Budget 2016-2017

The Chair asked Scrutiny Officers to look through previous referral on the budget to the Mayor and bring the recommendations on the Housing Revenue Accounts and the Dedicated Schools Grant to the attention of the Select Committees Chairs with a view to including these items on their work programmes.

Action >>>>>> Scrutiny Manager

RESOLVED that
i. the minutes of the open meeting held on 16 February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.
ii. the Housing Select Committee and the Sustainable Development Select Committee carry out an investigation into the Bermondsey and Catford Housing Zone projects.
iii. the budget referral to the Mayor be brought to the Housing Select Committee and Public Accounts Select Committee particularly on the Housing Revenues Account and the Dedicated Schools Grant.

129. Declarations of Interests
None.

130. Outstanding Scrutiny Items

Report noted.

131. Notification of Late and Urgent Items

Report noted.

132. Decision Made by Better Placed Joint Committee (Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) on 29 February 2016

Pathways to Employment (PTE) Phase 2 – Contract Award

The Strategic Partnership Manager introduced the report.

The Chair said the project was good, but Panel Members were concerned about the delay, and asked the reason for it. The Strategic Partnership Manager responded saying officers had not been told the reason for the delay. The Chair asked whether members could help, suggesting the Mayor could be asked to intervene. The Strategic Partnership Manager said as all the London Boroughs were experiencing the same setback, they could be able to do something collectively, through London Councils.

The Strategic Partnership Manager said Lewisham was in a unique position as the Council already had £1m funding and officers had hoped to get additional funds from the European Social Fund. She added that in the if the bid was not successful Lewisham could use the £1m to continue the project where they left off.

The Chair asked when Panel members should expect an update, and was told officers do not have any dates at this stage but would keep members informed. The Chair said Panel Members would like to urge the Mayor and Cabinet to approach the European Social Funding Body as a matter of urgency to resolve this issue, and they look forward to an update.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Better Placed Joint Committee (Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark) be noted.

133. Decisions Made by Mayor and Cabinet on 2 March 2016

Catford Regeneration Partnership Limited – 2016/17 Business Plan

The Interim Property Manager introduced the report.

The Chair stated that Panel Members had expressed concerns at previous meetings over the number of Directors in the company. This concern became evident when one of the two officers Directors left the authority leaving only one Director in the company. Panel Members thought it would be prudent to have 3 Directors instead of 2 with one of them a Non Executive Council Member. The
Chair asked how many Directors the company currently have, and was told 2 officers.

The Chair said he was aware that the Head of Law had provided advice for members in the past but Panel Members were mindful of avoiding a direct conflict of Interest as the company was fully owned by the Council, and Panel members thought an Executive split would be necessary. The Chair said it would be good for all Council Members to look at this issue with a view to exercising prudence, as the company falls within the remit of Council. The Chair asked whether Council should also be looking at the governance arrangements of the company. Councillor Muldoon said as the company was a limited company it falls within the remit of the Company Act and good governance arrangements should prevail.

Councillor Dacres said she acknowledged Panel Members concerns but would not want to pursue any issue that would result in a delay to the project. Councillor Curran said he agreed with ensuring the project was not delayed, and asked about the current situation with Milford Towers. The Interim Property Manager said he was not aware of any firm date in connection with Milford Towers.

Councillor Curran asked what was the reason for the delay and was told that although a lot of the necessary land had been purchased, negotiations with Iceland was still ongoing and this might be contributing to the delay. The Interim Property Manager said he did not have all the information, but would get back to Panel Members at a later date with details of the Regeneration timetable.

Action >>>>>> ED Resources & Regeneration

Councillor Curran said this issue had been discussed at the Sustainable Development Select Committee and members were concerned about the delay. Councillor Curran said it would be useful for members to receive an update. At each stage of the project. Councillor Curran asked whether officers could negotiate a fixed interest rate over a period, before interest rates go up. The Head of Corporate Resources said from an Estate Agent perspective interest rates would be kept under review.

Councillor Handley asked whether small businesses could be offered an incentive which could result in them wanting to extend their short-term tenancy contracts at a future date. The Interim Property Manager said officers were investigating various options.

The Chair said the issue of the number of Directors would be referred to the Constitution Working Party, and requested the Deputy Head of Law to speak to the Head of Law about this issue, with a view of it being resolved before the AGM. The Chair thanked officers for the report.

Action >>>>>> Head of Business & Committee

RESOLVED that

i. the decision of the Mayor be noted.
ii. a referral be made to the Constitution Working Party recommending that a Non Executive Member be appointed as Director to the Catford Regeneration Partnership company along with a review of governance.

134. Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees Work Programmes 2016-17 verbal update

The Chair said he had discussions with Select Committees Chairs as he had been informed by the Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration that there would be significant savings proposals in the next financial year which might affect the Select Committees Programmes. The Chair said Select Committees Chairs would have to look at their work programmes to ensure they are not overloaded, and agendas would need to be prioritised.

The Scrutiny Manager said after the Public Accounts Select Committee meeting, all the work programmes would be completed. The Scrutiny Manager asked Panel members to consider the tabled referral from Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme.

The Chair said Panel Members welcomed the referral and this scheme should be of great importance to all Council members. The Chair suggested that an all members briefing on this scheme should be arranged as soon as possible at the start of the new Municipal Year.

Action >>>>>>> Scrutiny Manager

The Chair informed Panel Members that the draft Select Committees Work Programmes would be coming to the Business Panel for agreement.

Meeting ended at 7.45pm                        Chair .....................