

# **MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, 8 March 2017 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Suzannah Clarke (Vice-Chair), Bill Brown, Amanda De Ryk, James-J Walsh, Mark Ingleby, Pauline Morrison and Pat Raven

APOLOGIES: Councillors Eva Stamirowski and Paul Upex

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Kplom Lotsu (SGM Capital Programmes), Simon Moss (Policy and Development Manager, Transport), Martin O'Brien (Asset Management Planning Manager), Mole Meade (Communication Workers Union) and Peter Meech (Communication Workers Union)

## **1. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2017**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting on 24 January be agreed as an accurate record.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

There were none.

## **3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet**

Councillor Handley circulated copies of a response from the Mayor of London to the letter from the Chairs of the Housing and Sustainable Development Select Committees arising from the joint meeting in October 2016.

Kplom Lotsu (SGM Capital Programme Delivery) responded to questions from the Committee on the response from Mayor and Cabinet. The following key points were noted:

- Decisions related to the renegotiation of the s106 brought about by the changes to the housing zone funding for the New Bermondsey project would be taken by the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Housing zone agreements required schemes to provide 35% affordable housing, however they also took into account viability and the other burdens being placed on schemes.
- In Lewisham the aspiration for the delivery of affordable housing in new developments was 50%.
- In the Catford housing zone there were a number of burdens being placed on the scheme, including the proposed provision of a civic complex and a potential contribution to the relocation of the road.
- There were different forms of affordable housing. The type of affordable housing chosen for a scheme would influence the amount of housing that could be provided.

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views to Mayor and Cabinet, as follows –

- The Committee notes the Mayor of London's response to Select Committee Chairs and welcomes the stated ambition to provide 35% affordable housing in

Lewisham's housing zones. However, the Committee asks that officers are clear about the definitions they use for affordable housing in future reports.

- The Committee notes that the bid document for the New Bermondsey housing zone only became available to Members after Mayor and Cabinet in February 2017.
- The Committee notes that there are many issues that are being explored as part of the independent inquiry into matters relating to New Bermondsey/Surrey Canal. Pending the outcome of the inquiry, the Committee may decide to scrutinise any substantial issues that are not covered in the inquiry report.

#### **4. Post Office changes**

It was noted that the Post Office had sent a written update about their proposed changes to crown post office services in Lewisham but due to short notice they were unable to send a representative to the meeting.

Mole Meade (Communication Workers Union) and Peter Meech (Communication Workers Union) addressed the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- The only place that was legally allowed to provide biometric residency checking services in the local community was the post office.
- Post offices had specialist machines that were used for providing Border Agency Services. These machines used biometrics and were operated by specially trained staff.
- The CWU believed that the information being provided to the public by the Post Office about closing and franchising post offices was inaccurate both by intent and omission.
- There were a number of problems with the post office franchising programme, including: the loss of specialist staff and services from established post offices as well as the frequent turnover of staff at new franchised post offices because of the typically low levels of pay on offer.
- The lease of the Sydenham post office building was owned by Lewisham Council. In Manchester, the Council had offered the post office the subsidised use of the building for a nominal level of rent.
- The lease for the Sydenham post office finished in April.
- There would be a demonstration in Sydenham in two weeks. There would also be public meetings to organise campaigns against the closure and franchising of both post offices.
- Politicians from all political parties had supported the campaign against post office closures.
- The post office on Rye Lane in Peckham closed last year, with the promise that another post office would open in the vicinity. However, the replacement post office was moved to a building on a leasing arrangement that was now coming to an end, meaning that there would soon be no services for the community.
- WHSmiths had taken on lots of franchises for post offices.
- There were regular changes of staff in Lewisham's post office, which was based in a WHSmiths.
- Post offices that were franchised were at risk of being closed if the businesses that were hosting them failed.

- The number of crown post offices had reduced substantially over time.
- The post office was losing half a million customers every year.
- Sub post masters were finding it difficult to maintain services because of the lack of direction being provided by the organisation.
- In France the post office had been turned into a bank, which made substantial annual profits.
- The CWU had put forward a plan to save the industry.
- The Union had asked the Post Office to meet together with the government to discuss the plans to save post offices, but the meeting had not been forthcoming.
- Current plans to continue to reduce the number of post offices would be detrimental for local communities, but with the support of communities, a number of post offices had been prevented from closure.

Mole Meade and Peter Meech responded to questions from the Committee and in the discussion that followed these key points were noted:

- It was not clear what the long term strategy for the post office was.
- There were some areas of the UK that had very few post offices and there was limited access to post office services.
- Crown post offices provided some DVLA and border agency services that could not be delivered from a franchised post office. Also, smaller post offices could not be able to store parcels for 'click and collect' services.
- The CWU would provide a list of services that would be lost in Lewisham if New Cross Gate and Sydenham post offices closed – as well as a list of the distances people might need to travel from Lewisham to access those services.
- There was no legal requirement to provide a range of post office service in a local area. The Post Office Act stipulated that there had to be a post office within 1 mile of 99% of the population in an urban area and 3 miles in a rural area, but the Act did not specify what services should be provided.
- The CWU was working with politicians from all parties to build support for the future of the Post Office.

Resolved: that the Committee refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet, as follows-

- The Committee notes the Council's decision in February 2017 to oppose the closure of New Cross crown post office and for the same reasons outlined in that decision the Committee opposes the closure of Sydenham crown post office. The Committee believes the loss of skilled jobs, skilled staff and the economic impact on the high street would be a serious blow to the local economy and to consumers.
- The Committee asks that the Mayor write to the government minister responsible, and the Chief Executive of the Post Office, about the potential loss of Sydenham crown post office.
- The Committee requests that Council officers be tasked with investigating how lease arrangements might be negotiated to retain the crown post office in Sydenham for the benefit of the local community.
- The Chair of Committee intends to write to Jim Dowd about the potential closure Sydenham crown post office and asks that the Mayor do the same.

- The Committee recommends that the Council should request further information from the Post Office about its strategy to preserve the full range of post office services for Lewisham residents.

## 5. Sustainable energy

Martin O'Brien (Asset Management Planning Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- The Home Energy Conservation Act required all local authorities in England to publish a report on their plans for energy efficiency. The next report was due to be published by the end of March and responsibility for signing this off had been delegated to the Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration.
- There was an ambitious plan two years ago to create a sustainability consultancy. This had run up against legal, HR and logistical hurdles, which could not be overcome. Officers were still outward looking and continually explored opportunities for working with other boroughs.
- Government programmes in this area had become increasingly limited.
- Work was taking place to develop heat networks in the borough.
- There was money from government to enable heat network projects to get started. A report on the technical and commercial viability of a heat network in the north of the borough would be completed in the next few months.
- There was also work taking place to deliver carbon offset projects. The London Plan enabled developments that were unable to deliver carbon savings on site to do so by funding other projects in the borough. Officers had developed an evidence base around this work.
- The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) on affordable warmth was the main way of funding fuel poverty and energy efficiency work in homes. From April 10% of the funding would be delivered through local authority schemes.
- Work on fuel poverty had been delivered since 2012 in spite of changing circumstances, including the loss of dedicated officers to carry out this work. From August 2017, current internal funding would end and unless an alternative source was secured the borough would not have any fuel poverty offer.

Martin O'Brien responded to questions from the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- Fuel poverty figures were provided from the government's fuel poverty strategy.
- The measure for fuel poverty had recently been replaced. Previously for homes to be considered to be in fuel poverty, they were required to spend 10% of their income on heating their homes. The figure was now based on a metric of household income and the estimated cost of heating a home to an acceptable standard, which indicated that one in ten Lewisham households were in fuel poverty. The figures were available from the department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-sub-regional-statistics>)
- London had been poor at attracting ECO funding because of the cost of carrying out this work in the city. The responsibility for meeting the

requirements of the obligation lay with energy companies and they found it easier to work outside of London.

- Officers had been working to make it more attractive to work in London. One way of doing this was to support the delivery of schemes across, with and for, other London boroughs.
- Officers working on sustainable energy were still drawing in some income. They had recently delivered a piece of funded work on fuel poverty referral networks and a smart meter awareness project in Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich.
- A community share scheme had been set up in Greenwich and Lewisham to place solar panels on schools and generate dividends for community investors through a feed-in tariff. Feed in tariff funding had been cut – which limited the likelihood of this kind of project in the future.
- Vulnerable households for fuel poverty work were identified via referrals from front line staff.
- Communications about fuel poverty work were sent out on a rolling basis.
- Carbon emissions had fallen considerably in the borough since 2012. Whilst the Council wanted to tell a positive story about the work it had carried out on carbon reduction, it could not wholly claim credit for the reduction. The economy and changes to the energy grid had substantially reduced carbon emissions. But, it was recognised that the Council could have a significant impact on delivering carbon reductions from housing stock.
- ECO funded loft and cavity wall insulation and the installation of first time central heating.

In the Committee's discussions the following point was also noted:

- Martin O'Brien and his team should be highly commended for their commitment to innovation and their ongoing efforts to explore new ways to deliver services.
- The Committee requested a graphical representation of the energy savings that had been achieved over the past ten years.

Resolved: to refer the Committee's views to Mayor and Cabinet, as follows-

- The Committee commends the work of officers in delivering the Council's sustainable energy ambitions. The Committee believes that the Council should find ways to further publicise its good work in reducing carbon emissions.
- The Committee recommends that the Mayor write to his counterparts in the London Boroughs of Bromley, Bexley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth and Southwark to encourage them to work collaboratively with Lewisham in order to access the benefits of the energy company obligation affordable warmth scheme.

## **6. Modern roads review update**

Simon Moss (Transport Policy and Development Manager) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- The 20mph limit was being delivered in line with Lewisham Labour's Mayoral and Council manifesto commitment.

- Officers had reviewed a number of different models for the implementation of the 20mph limit in Lewisham.
- It had been agreed that Lewisham would follow the Southwark model of implementing the 20mph limit on all borough roads and then monitor speeds in order to decide where additional measures would be required to enforce the limit.
- There were a number of roads in the borough that did not feel like they were 20mph in their design and layout.
- Average speeds on the fastest roads with 20mph limits were up to 38mph.
- Work had started on proposals to deliver work to improve compliance with the 20mph limit. It was recognised that it would be a challenge to deliver the speed limit across the whole borough.

Simon Moss responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- Interventions to slow traffic on busiest roads would include narrowing the carriageway on some roads or removing centre line markings, which had both been shown to reduce average traffic speeds.
- Traffic calming might take place on some roads using traffic humps – but the introduction of these measures had to take account of the range of road uses, including bus routes.
- Introduction of informal crossing points and zebra crossings might also be used to slow and smooth the traffic flow.
- Space for cyclists might be provided as part of the narrowing of parts of the road network.
- There was insufficient evidence to link the reduction in traffic speeds to improved air quality but work was taking place in Lewisham to gather evidence about improvements of air quality linked to reduced speeds.
- The primary reason for implementing the speed limit was to reduce the incidence and severity of collisions.
- Work to progress the cycling strategy was underway, a further update would be provided to the Committee before the summer.

In the Committee's discussions these key points were also noted:

- One of the main arguments for the scheme was the reduction in fatalities of children and vulnerable road users.
- Members wanted further quality data about the impact of 20mph zones on air quality and on accidents.
- It was hoped that cycle superhighway four would be extended into the north of the borough.

Resolved: to note the report.

## **7. Select Committee work programme**

Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report and asked that the Committee put forward suggestions for the 2017-18 work programme. In the discussion that followed, these key points were noted:

- The Committee should continue to receive quarterly updates on Catford but it would also agree a second interim report on the redevelopment.
- Concerns were raised about decisions being made on Catford before options had been provided for scrutiny.
- Waste, recycling and fly-tipping were areas of interest, an update would be added to the draft work plan in July.
- Enforcement and noise nuisance were also of interest.
- An update on the asset management system would be considered at the meeting in April.

Resolved: to put forward the Committee's suggestions for the work programme to the first meeting of the 2017/18 year.

## **8. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet**

Resolved: that the Committee's views under items three, four and five be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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