

# MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 20 March 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Hall (Chair), Gareth Siddorn (Vice-Chair), Liam Curran, Carl Handley, John Muldoon and Luke Sorba.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin and Councillor Pauline Morrison.

## 92. Declarations of Interests

None were made.

## 93. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 15 March 2018

*Gypsy and Traveller Site Local Plan Update.*

The report was introduced by the Strategic Planning Manager who explained the background to the recommendations accepted by the Mayor at his meeting on March 15.

The Chair noted the Pool Court site was on the boundary of the Bellingham and Rushey Green wards which essentially meant a Catford location. He asked had full consultation taken place with nearby affected residents and businesses such as the scaffolding firm, St Dunstons College and Canadian Avenue residents.

The Strategic Planning Manager laid out details of the lengthy consultation process that had begun in March 2016. He was pressed by the Chair to say what specific consultation had taken place with the businesses and localities he had mentioned. Graham Harrington, a Council Planning Consultant, responded by mentioning notices had been published in the Pool Court area advertising open consultations available to all.

The Chair asked how many consultees had agreed with the Pool Court designation. Mr Harrington responded by saying figures were shown in an appendix to the Mayor & Cabinet report.

The Chair asked if consideration had been given to undertaking a consultation on one site only. The Strategic Planning Manager said this would occur as part of the Local Plan process in September or October 2018. The Chair believed that would be on the details only and felt the previous consultation which pitted the Pool Court site against an alternative social club location in New Cross was unbalanced.

Councillor Muldoon pointed out Pool Court was within a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) because of the existence of Stag Beetles, an endangered species. The Senior Programme Manager reported on the

presence of Japanese Knotweed which had eroded the quality of the SNCI in this part of a much wider designated area. He also stated the land in question was the subject of heavy flytipping and any ecological survey was more likely to find industrial waste than rare bugs. He added that rotting timber locations were the preferred habitat for Stag Beetles.

Councillor Sorba observed that the proposals appeared dependent on the purchase of Network Rail and that elsewhere in the borough that body had proved difficult to deal with. Officers expressed optimism that Network Rail would release their holding allowing the site to be expanded from three to six pitches.

Councillor Curran noted GLA funds would not be forthcoming for the flood alleviation element and he received categorical assurances from the Senior Programme Manager that Lewisham had the funds in place to undertake the scheme. He said planning permission would be sought later in the year and works would take 12 to 18 months to complete, culminating in mid 2020.

Councillor Curran asked what consultation had taken place with the Traveller Community. Mr Harrington replied that three meetings had taken place with the ad hoc Lewisham Traveller Forum which strongly supported the Pool Court site. The Chair said he had met with the Irish Centre's Traveller Outreach Worker who indicated no visits had been made to the site. Mr Harrington stated Traveller representatives had been provided with plans and photographs of Pool Court.

Councillor Curran asked if a six pitch site would be big enough to cater for demand. The Strategic Planning Manager assured him six pitches would cater for current demand.

Councillor Curran received further assurances that vehicular access to the site would be adequate for both caravans and emergency vehicles.

Councillor Hall stated his remaining concern that the site would be in a Flood Plain.

Councillor Curran questioned the total comparative costs of this site and a housing site and was provided with an answer in a closed session for his question only.

Councillor Muldoon sought legal advice as to the consultation threshold. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed the level of consultation undertaken exceeded any statutory requirement.

The Chair summed up the scrutiny of the Mayoral decision by advising the Business Panel of the Constitutional options open to them. The Business Panel agreed to note the Mayor's decision and asked that a minute of their discussion be furnished to a meeting of the Mayor & Cabinet.

**RESOLVED** that the decision of the Mayor be noted and a minute of the Business Panel's discussion be provided to the Mayor & Cabinet

#### **94. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act, as amended by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (Amendments) (England) Regulations 2006:-

4. Decision made by Mayor and Cabinet on 15 March 2018

#### **95. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 15 March 2018**

##### *Deptford Southern Housing Sites*

The report was presented by the Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager.

The Chair he said he felt the report title was somewhat obscure and he had been made aware of some contentious elements relating to the proposal.

The Chair questioned the achievability of the ambitious affordable housing targets. The Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager stated the original 35% target had been guaranteed by contract; the increase to 50% following additional grant aid was secured by signed contract and the latest 74% target was under the terms of a signed legal agreement.

The Chair queried the viability of the funding and was informed Peabody had a long term strategic funding relationship with the GLA and all necessary funding was in place.

The Chair mentioned protests being made by supporters of the Tidemill Community Gardens and asked if there was any way in which that facility could be retained in its current location. The Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager said the scheme would become significantly smaller if the Garden was kept. Efforts were continuing to try and reprovide the facility in an alternative location.

Councillor Sorba asked if there were general implications if the Council used a majority of its global Right to Buy receipts on one location. The Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager advised the Panel that it was important to commit the Right to Buy receipts as failure to spend meant they had to be given to the Government with interest.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.03pm