

MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 4 June 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Patrick Codd (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Suzannah Clarke, Mark Ingleby, Louise Krupski, Pauline Morrison and James-J Walsh

APOLOGIES: Councillors Liam Curran, Obajimi Adefiranye and Alan Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Sakina Sheikh, Councillor Alan Hall, Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Martin O'Brien (Climate Resilience Manager), David Syme (Strategic Planning Manager) and Simon Zelestis (Programme and Infrastructure Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2019

1.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 April be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were none.

3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

3.1 The Committee noted that it was due to receive responses to referrals on fire safety; the pubs review; the planning annual monitoring report and the New Cross Gate opportunity study.

4. Referral from the Public Accounts Select Committee

4.1 Councillor Sheikh (Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny) asked to address the Committee regarding the referral, the following key points were noted:

- There was apprehension in the community about the lack of consultation and clarity regarding proposals for the development of the Catford Constitutional Club.
- There were possible major implications for the local community related to the loss of the pub, which also served as a community centre.
- The only information that had been made available to councillors and residents about plans for the pub was in the report to the Public Accounts Select Committee. This was not an appropriate way to inform the community or councillors about proposals for redevelopment.
- There was significant alarm about the timing of the proposals. The lack of consultation meant that there was no clarity about whether the redevelopment was imminent or whether it would take place over a longer period.
- There were also fears in the community about access to housing and gentrification.
- In order to gain further clarity about the proposals for the redevelopment of the Catford Constitutional Club and examine the consultation (or lack

thereof) carried out by officers - the Committee should ask Mayor and Cabinet to delay any upcoming decisions.

4.2 The Committee discussed the referral, the following key points were noted:

- Local councillors highlighted the misinformation that had been distributed about proposals for the Catford Constitutional Club.
- The Council had no proposals for closing the pub. A correction had been made in local news reports to clarify this issue. The Council had made it clear that the pub was safe.
- Issues had been confused and conflated. The pub and the pub operator were separate entities. Existing arrangements were based on a meanwhile use and whilst the current team running the pub should be commended for their work the owner of the pub chain would not necessarily be the right future operator.
- The Council had strong protections in place for pubs. The Committee had firmly supported the 'agent of change' principle for developments near pubs – which placed the emphasis on new housing developments to protect the operation of pre-existing pub businesses.
- Initial messages about the plans for the Catford Constitutional Club had not been communicated clearly but the information that was available had been somewhat misinterpreted.
- There were also misunderstandings about the Catford Regeneration Partnership Limited (CRPL). It was a company wholly owned by the Council, which was operated by Council employees and its actions were directed by the Council.
- The Committee should consider the issue at its meeting on 4 July – and members of the public should be invited to submit questions for clarification.
- There were no decisions on the published notice of key decisions relating to the redevelopment of the Catford Constitutional Club.
- Any future proposals for redevelopment would have to be submitted to planning for approval.
- Members had been involved in public consultation events and workshops relating to the masterplanning process for Catford.
- The Committee did not have sufficient information to discuss the details of any upcoming proposals at the meeting, which is why the item had been placed on the agenda for the Committee's meeting on 4 July.

4.3 Councillor Hall addressed the Committee under standing orders - the following key points were noted:

- The Business Plan for CRPL would be considered by the full Council in July. It proposed redevelopment of the Catford Constitutional Club in 2020. The Council had already submitted plans for planning permission for the Catford Constitutional Club.
- Studio Egret West (the masterplanners for Catford) had a ten month contract to develop the masterplan for the town centre. That ten month period had ended and the masterplan had not yet been produced.
- The Committee was giving tacit agreement for the Catford Constitutional Club to be removed from the masterplanning process.

4.4 Resolved:

- That officers would be asked to produce a report for the Committee's meeting on 4 July regarding the town centre regeneration as well as the extent and timing of the Catford Regeneration Partnership's plans for the Catford Constitutional Club. It was also agreed that Members of the public would be invited to submit questions to the Committee in advance of that meeting.

4.5 A vote proposed by Cllr Sheikh was not carried on a suggestion to ask Mayor and Cabinet for: a timeline of key decisions for the regeneration of Catford; additional clarity about proposals for the Catford Constitutional Club - and further information about the consultation on the purported planning application currently under consideration.

5. Home energy conservation

5.1 Martin O'Brien (Climate Resilience Manager) introduced the report, the following key points were noted:

- The Home Energy Conservation Act placed a statutory duty on housing authorities to give account every two years for the work being carried out to improve energy efficiency.
- It was the only statutory requirement on local authorities in the area of energy conservation. The single requirement was that each authority had to produce a report, which *could* merely confirm that no work was being carried out. However, Lewisham had decided to produce a full report.
- The Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019. The scope and impact of the declaration was significant.
- Declarations were also being made by councils across the country.
- Most people agreed that climate change was a significant issue and that action was required. But action so far had not been as fast or as substantial as was required to bring about change.
- The public sector had an important role to play in tackling climate change, not least because volatility in the climate would have the most detrimental impact on the most vulnerable in society.
- The Council needed to demonstrate leadership in terms of the sustainability of its estate - as well as the way it used energy to deliver services and through its partnerships.
- Officers had commissioned work to explore how it should respond to the climate emergency declaration.
- A working group had also been set up to help develop an action plan.
- Cost options would be developed which would compare business as usual with proposals for significant reductions in carbon emissions.
- Officers were also considering how future key decisions made by the Council would impact on the delivery of this work.
- Nationally, work had taken place to decarbonise the electricity grid but there was still a significant reliance on fossil fuels for heating.
- Work was being carried out to make use of the energy being generated by the South East London Combined Heat and Power plant (SELCHP)

- Work was also taking place with neighbouring boroughs to support vulnerable residents to access funding to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- The Council was planning to launch a community energy fund – which would provide small grants to community organisations to delivery projects to improve energy efficiency.
- Work was taking place with Lewisham Homes and with the Council's planning department to ensure that energy efficiency was a key consideration for future plans.

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

- Lewisham planning policy required new developments to conform with the London Plan – which used a hierarchy for energy usage strategies (in order of priority): be lean, be clean, be green. This meant that new developments should be built to require as little energy as possible. After this, the requirement was that the energy that was being used should be as sustainable as possible.
- 40% of the carbon emissions in the borough were produced by domestic housing. The largest proportion of this was from owner occupiers. The market for energy efficiency measures for housing was not well developed nor well trusted.
- The challenge was to propose solutions to householders in a trusted form. This would focus on reducing demand but it would also include supplying energy in clean ways.
- Lewisham was slightly ahead of other London Boroughs in terms of its carbon reductions (from the 2005 baseline). However, it was difficult to directly attribute this directly to any specific projects.
- The Government Energy Company Obligation required all bill payers to contribute to efficiency measures through their bills. This had a disproportionate impact on low income households.
- It was easier for companies to provide efficiency measures outside of London – particularly in Scotland, where there was match funding. It was also easier to make improvements in houses (which only required agreement/consents from one owner) rather than in flats or homes in multiple occupancy.
- Lewisham had created a partnership through South East London Community Energy to find households that could benefit from support.
- Lewisham had also been successful at accessing other sources of funding.
- The Council's previous carbon reduction strategy was published in 2008. Resources had been restrained since this time and delivering projects had been a priority (rather than developing a new strategy).
- The infrastructure to develop a heat network was costly – up until now – there hadn't been sufficient certainty from developers to justify this from a commercial perspective.

5.3 **Resolved:** that the Committee would refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows –

- The Committee welcomes the work being carried out by officers to deliver home energy efficiency in the borough. It also welcomes the initial work that is taking place in response to the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. However, the Committee believes that officers working in this area need additional resources to deliver this work.
- The Committee believes that one way to increase funding would be to provide upfront backing for 'green projects' (such as solar installations or other micro generation projects) in the borough that would deliver a sustainable longer-term financial return. This may result in added support for Lewisham's most vulnerable households whilst also generating resources for future work by the Council. The Committee would welcome a written response from Mayor and Cabinet alongside the attendance of the relevant Cabinet Member at a future Sustainable Development Select Committee meeting in order to provide details of the Executive's response to this proposal.

6. Community infrastructure levy neighbourhood CIL strategy

6.1 Simon Zelestis (Programme and Infrastructure Manager) introduced the report, the following key points were noted:

- Community infrastructure levy was implemented in Lewisham in 2015 – proposals for allocation were developed in 2016 and 2017.
- The current proposals for neighbourhood community infrastructure levy (NCIL) funding had been considered on a number of occasions by scrutiny and other groups.
- In future, the intention was for NCIL spending to be reported in the planning annual monitoring report.
- Responses had been provided on issues raised by the Committee (and others) in the report to Mayor and Cabinet.

6.2 Simon Zelestis and David Syme (Strategic Planning Manager) responded to questions from the Committee, the following key points were noted:

- In response to the Committee's previous comments – additional information had been provided about the process for allocating and spending funds.
- The proposals included a review mechanism to determine how the scheme was operating at the end of the first year.
- The most recent indices of multiple deprivation were from 2015. These were the latest (and only nationally recognised) analysis of deprivation.
- The Council's existing audit and financial management processes would be used to ensure that funding was being spent correctly.
- The same mechanisms would be used for money spent by the Council and for funding spent by other groups.
- Officers had developed framework criteria to ensure that spending was being delivered in line with the Council's corporate strategy.
- It would be the role of members to support local people to balance funding between popular and less popular (but no less important) bids for funding.

- Funding had been provided for an additional officer post to support this work in the cultural and community development division.
- The resourcing and availability of officer time would be reviewed after the first year.
- Consideration had been given to the structure of the local assemblies' team and the new requirements on it to support this work.
- 5% of the NICL funding would be retained for administration – as well as 4% from Mayoral CIL funding.
- It was recognised that the structure of ward assemblies would need to change – and that the voting system would need to be improved.
- Voting would be open to all residents of a ward. Additional work was taking place to explore future options.
- Lewisham's proposals had been modelled on successful schemes in other boroughs.

6.3 In Committee discussions, the following key points were also noted:

- Scrutiny at the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee would focus on the capacity of local assemblies to equitably distribute the increased level of funding that was being made available.
- There were concerns about how funding would be made available for projects that were important but not popular.
- Members asked whether costs for officer time could be recovered from the NCIL budget. In particular, there were questions about the amount of time officers in the assemblies' team were likely to spend on carrying out this work.
- There was a concern about how the availability of the new funding would be communicated to residents. Members also asked how the voting would be secured to ensure that only residents would be able to vote.
- The Committee welcomed the proposals and thanked officers for returning to the Committee with responses to the questions that were raised previously.

6.4 **Resolved:** that the Committee would refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows - the Committee recommends that - in advance of making its decision- Mayor and Cabinet should ensure that it has sufficient details from officers about:

- The framework for making decisions, with specific reference to the role of local councillors. This follows from Members' concern about the availability of funding for important projects that lack popular appeal. And in addition - how appropriate consideration will be given to funding projects for minority and/or marginalised groups.
- The types of projects that can and cannot be funded. This is in reference to Members' concerns that the funding could focus on infrastructure to the detriment of community projects and services.
- How communication with residents will be carried out to raise awareness of what the funds are designed to achieve - as well as to help residents understand their important role in the process and to increase participation from all sections of the community.
- How the voting system is intended to work in practice - in order to ensure wide participation and the security of the ballot.

The Committee intends to revisit these issues as part of its future work programme. In addition, it will propose a workshop for councillors to develop a consistent approach to NCIL and to share ideas about best practice.

7. Parks management review: scoping report

7.1 The Committee discussed the scoping report for the parks management review, the following key points were noted:

- Members wanted to explore how tree planting initiatives were contributing to climate change mitigation. It was proposed that this should also include management practices for existing trees in parks.
- There was interest in the planning of biodiversity corridors to enable insect migration.
- Members also wanted to explore options for flood alleviation and the potential remodelling of parks.
- It was proposed that the Committee should explore the types of equipment being used to manage parks and the potential to reduce carbon emissions whilst also enabling rewilding.
- It was noted that some parks were closed early – which did not enable their use for cyclists on designated cycle routes.
- There should be a list of parks that had been rated as ‘poor’ in the open spaces study and a number of these should be included in the list for visits.
- There were also questions about lighting in parks – which could enable the use of parks in the evening.
- There were potential questions about the management and maintenance of children and youth play spaces.
- Members were keen to highlight the importance of urban national park initiatives.

7.2 **Resolved:** That the scoping paper be agreed subject to the comments above.

8. Select Committee work programme

8.1 The Committee discussed the work programme for its next meeting, the following key points were noted:

- The report on Catford should clearly set out the different issues involved. Members were particularly interested in understanding the separation between the activity being carried out by the Catford regeneration partnership and the broader plans for the town centre.

8.2 **Resolved:** that work programme be agreed subject to the comments above.

9. Items to be referred to Mayor and Cabinet

9.1 **Resolved:** that the Committee’s views under items five and six be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

Chair:

Date:

