

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUSINESS PANEL

Tuesday, 1 October 2019 at 7.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown, Peter Bernards, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Liam Curran, Joan Millbank, John Muldoon and Luke Sorba

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Paul Bell, Cabinet Member for Housing

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sakina Sheikh and Councillor Jim Mallory

234. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the open meeting held on 18 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

235. Declarations of Interests

None received.

236. Outstanding Scrutiny Matters

RESOLVED that the report noted.

237. Notification of Late and Urgent Items

RESOLVED that the report noted.

238. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 18 September 2019

The meeting was addressed by a resident on behalf of the local community at Achilles Street. The Panel heard that residents were opposed to the decision at a meeting of the Mayor and Cabinet on 18 September 2019 about the Landlord's Offer in relation to the proposed redevelopment at Achilles Street. The representative highlighted reasons for the objection, advising that the report on which the decision was based was published late in breach of the Council's procedures and statutory guidelines. Therefore, residents believed that the urgency in which the proposal was considered provided insufficient time for public scrutiny, and limited opportunity for Members to properly assess the impact of the Offer on the local community.

Continuing with his submission, the representative informed the Panel that residents were of the view that consultations on the proposal were inadequate because the focus was on the demolition of existing buildings. It was stated that the report lacked details about the number and types of housing and commercial units to be delivered. Furthermore, information in the report about the bulk, scale and density of the proposed redevelopment was vague. The representative stated that residents were disappointed that there was no mention in the report about

how potential residents and businesses would be affected in relation to social infrastructure, and economic and environmental implications. Thus, residents felt that the Offer would not benefit the local community because it was supportive of potential private homeowners, with a view to substantially increase profit margins for the developer.

The representative also suggested to the Panel that residents and business owners would welcome an opportunity to have real choices throughout the redevelopment process. Therefore, residents required that options should be communicated during the various consultation phases, in order to help them gauge the impact of the redevelopment on their living conditions.

In closing, the representative added that residents' concerns could be further alleviated with an assurance that the legal connotations to the Offer would provide clarity about social housing affordability, and levels of rent and service charges for council homes. In addition to that, transparency about how the Offer would affect leaseholders, council tenants and those in temporary housing, including businesses would be welcomed. Notwithstanding that, residents believed that the Panel should recommend a reconsideration of decision taken by the Mayor and Cabinet in light of their concerns, in particular that a significant amount of public money would be spent to deliver the change.

In response to questions by the Panel, the Regeneration and New Supply Manager, and the Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that there had been no breach of rules in the process, as the published report about the Offer was in accordance with legislation, and the Council's constitutional guidance. The Officers stated that the Council was supportive of the redevelopment of Achilles Street Estate because a substantial number of council-owned homes to be delivered would be allocated on social rent levels for families and individuals. Thus, the Council would continue its liaisons with the developer, with a view to increase the 35% of affordable dwellings currently earmarked for council tenants.

The Panel also received an assurance by the Officers that the engagement activities undertaken to date were adequate. As an indication, the Council had held several consultations with groups and individuals in the local community, and feedback and suggestions received were used to inform and influence the Offer, which was produced in accordance with Greater London Authority's guidance.

The Officers further clarified to the Panel that the Offer, in its current state, was relevant to tenants in council-owned homes, but that the next round of consultations would extend to businesses and other key stakeholders likely to be affected by the change. However, the design of the proposed redevelopment, and the impact on the environment and social infrastructure would be mitigated and managed by conditions via the planning process in accordance with the draft London Plan, and Lewisham's Local Plan.

Councillor Paul Bell, Cabinet Member for Housing also responded to questions raised by the Panel. The Cabinet Member echoed statements by the Officers, highlighting that the proposed redevelopment was based on collaborative work with the local community. Thus, the Offer scheme would be abandoned by a "no" vote by residents. The Cabinet Member pointed out that it should however be noted that the Council was supportive of the redevelopment because

implementation would not only benefit tenants in council-owned properties, but also leaseholders and eligible residents in temporary accommodation currently residing on the estate.

In his closing remarks, the Cabinet Member informed that current occupiers of the estate would be supported by the Council unto alternative suitable housing during the construction work on the estate. He clarified that residents would not be disadvantaged by the Offer, as the formulae for calculating rent levels would mirror those across the spectrum of social housing. Thus, any increase would be in accordance with rent levels set by the London Affordable Rent agency for secured lifetime tenancies. The Cabinet Member added that leaseholders would also receive new homes, and that they would not be required to pay additional costs on the rebuilt estate outside the scope of their contract specifications.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair, Councillor Bill Brown, thanked the residents' representative, the Officers, and the Cabinet Member for their contribution at the meeting.

In considering submissions made at the meeting, the Panel commented that the decision at the Mayor and Cabinet meeting in regards to the Offer was consistent with the Council's manifesto to increase affordable housing provision for residents. Thus, the decision would not be 'called-in' for further scrutiny, but rather, the redevelopment activities should be subjected to regular monitoring by the Housing Select Committee, so that stakeholders' views continue to be considered in the process. The Panel stated that concerns about design, infrastructure, the environment, and related issues would be considered by the relevant Committee within planning guidelines.

RESOLVED that the decision of Mayor and Cabinet taken about the Landlord's Offer in relation to the proposed redevelopment at Achilles Street, be noted.

239. Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees Work Programmes - 2019-2020

The Panel received an update report presented by the Scrutiny Manager in regards to Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees activities. Councillor Muldoon, Chair of the Healthier Select Committee, highlighted progress about the Clinical Commissioning Group merger proposals currently being scrutinised by the South London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Panel considered the submissions, and suggested that the Housing Select Committee should receive regular updates on the proposed redevelopment of Achilles Street Estate.

RESOLVED – That updates on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees, be noted.

240. 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:-

This is a summary of the discussion that took place at the closed meeting:

241. Decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 18 September 2019

The Panel noted decisions made by Mayor and Cabinet on 18 September 2019.

RESOLVED that the decision made by Mayor and Cabinet be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.34pm.

Chair