

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 11 June 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Brown (Chair), Sakina Sheikh (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Tauseef Anwar, Peter Bernards, Patrick Codd, Liam Curran, Sophie Davis, Colin Elliott, Aisling Gallagher, Alan Hall, Carl Handley, Sue Hordijkeno, Coral Howard, Mark Ingleby, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Silvana Kelleher, Jim Mallory, Paul Maslin, Joan Millbank, Hilary Moore, Pauline Morrison, John Muldoon, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Stephen Penfold, Kim Powell, James Rathbone, Luke Sorba and Eva Stamirowski

APOLOGIES: Councillors Obajimi Adefiranye, Juliet Campbell, Suzannah Clarke, Tom Copley, Leo Gibbons, Octavia Holland, Louise Krupski, Lionel Openshaw, James-J Walsh and Susan Wise

ALSO PRESENT: Charlotte Dale (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Mayor Damien Egan (Mayor), Barrie Neal (Director of Corporate Policy and Governance), Katharine Nidd (Strategic Procurement and Commercial Services Manager) (LBL), Georgina Nunney (Principal Lawyer) and Janet Senior (Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration)

1. Minutes of the meetings held on 7 March 2019 and 3 April 2019

1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes be approved as accurate records of the meetings.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were none.

3. Response to Referrals - Procurement Process and Legal Advice

3.1 In relation to the procurement referral response, the Chair reminded Members that there would be a procurement all-member briefing on Monday 17 June.

3.2 In relation to the legal advice referral response, the Chair commented that he was unhappy with the time it had taken to agree an acceptable process for managing Q&A sessions and had asked if all future legal advice to scrutiny could come directly from the Head of Law. In response to comments from a member of the Committee it was noted that parity of esteem with the Executive was of paramount importance and that legal advice should aim to facilitate what Members want to do, whilst ensuring it was legally and constitutionally acceptable.

3.3 **RESOLVED:** That the responses be noted.

4. Responses to questions raised with Cabinet Members at previous meetings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

4.1 **RESOLVED:** That the responses be noted.

5. Q&A Session with the Mayor

5.1 The Mayor introduced his report and ran through some of the notable achievements of the administration to date:

- The new corporate strategy
- Being open about austerity
- Becoming a sanctuary borough and welcoming more refugee families
- Improving school results with the Lewisham Learning Partnership
- The Greening Fund
- Insourcing contracts
- The public health approach to serious youth violence
- Establishing corporate values.

5.2 The following responses to questions were heard:

1. Insourcing

The decision on the future of Youth First would be taken by Members and in line with the commitment to consider insourcing wherever possible. The relevant report would include an exploration of this option. The buildings used by Youth First remain council owned and Youth First pays a lease and running costs. Youth First was also being looked at as part of the Early Help Review.

2. Cycle Routes and the Catford Masterplan

Cycling provision is a key part of the Catford masterplanning process, including the Bromley Road cycle route. The Catford masterplan has highlighted the benefits of taking a place based approach and there have been calls for masterplans in other parts of the borough.

3. Webcasting

One of the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review is to start webcasting meetings and this is likely to come in during the course of the municipal year. The 26k paid to public-i thus far for support should still be able to be used; and an update on whether the timeframe for using the purchased support can be extended would be provided.

4. Modern Slavery

The Council was pioneering in terms of modern slavery and had revised procurement procedures to address this issue. However, it was accepted that whilst trying to procure more from small and medium sized businesses was positive, these organisations often lacked the resources to fully analyse their supply chains. The Council had chosen to focus initially on high risk areas and had signed up to “Electronics

Watch” run by a Dutch organisation that provided recommended suppliers for electronics.

5. Workforce development

5 staff from Kier had become council employees, alongside another 45 that had also been brought in. HR was also working on a leadership programme which would have a particular focus on the recruitment and progression of BAME staff.

6. Plastic waste

Although assurances had been received about how our plastic recycling was processed, the Mayor would confirm the current arrangements for plastic recycling processing and seek assurances on how and where it is processed. He would also look into the potential for shredding plastic waste and turning it into bricks.

7. Lewisham Learning

The Interim Director of Lewisham Learning was leaving in September but recruitment for his replacement was underway.

8. Under 5 Base, Bellingham Green

The maintenance of the under 5 base on Bellingham Green by Eco Communities would be investigated.

9. Tidemill

All legal avenues open to the protesters had been exhausted. It was believed that the local campaign groups would now be leaving the site. Work to build out the site and provide social housing would start shortly, with more than 100 families expected to be taken off the housing register as a result of the development. The costs incurred by the council as a result of the meanwhile users of the site not leaving the site as agreed, was in the region of £1m.

10. Affordable and temporary housing

Three pop up temporary accommodation developments were in the pipeline. The Ladywell site was due to be built out to provide more housing. The target was for 50% genuinely affordable housing. In terms of affordable housing, the Council wanted London Living rent or below, with lifetime tenancies. Developers were getting the message that the Council had high expectation regarding percentages of genuinely affordable housing on new developments (at London Living rent levels or below). There were some legacy developments that already had some planning permissions agreed but where possible, percentages would be renegotiated.

11. Private Renters Union

An update on progress in establishing a Private Renters Union would be provided. There was no reason why the Lewisham branch of the London Renters Union would not be consulted on plans.

12. Sanctuary Borough

The Council held a range of civic events to welcome refugees and work was very much focussed on involving the community and gaining the trust of local community groups working with migrants.

13. Lewisham Town Centre/ S106 and CIL

The Council wanted to ensure that all section 106 funding and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding was spent in a way which maximised its positive effects and involved the community and councillors, as part of a long-term sustainable approach. The Greening fund was making use of S106 funding. The approach for spending neighbourhood CIL funding was due to be agreed at the next Council meeting. Local Assemblies would be involved and areas without a lot of development but high on the deprivation index would still benefit from funding under the proposed formula for its allocation.

14. HMOs

There was a cartel of landlords buying up properties to turn into HMOs on the edge of the inner London (to benefit from higher housing payments). Where this impacted on Lewisham, Phoenix Housing Association was offering to buy properties which was a more preferable option to rogue landlords. The Council had imposed article 4 directions in Bellingham, Downham, Grove Park and Whitefoot (withdrawing permitted development rights for HMOs). The borough wide licensing scheme had to be consulted on for one year prior to imposition or the Council would be liable to pay compensation to landlords affected by the scheme. Councillors should encourage residents to take part in the consultation.

15. Catford Conservative Club building

There were no plans not to have a pub on the site of the former Catford Conservative Club building. The building was of historical significance and the restoration of the building was estimated to cost in the region of £1.5m. Potentially a mixed development with housing might be possible. A timeline for the early phase of the Catford regeneration programme, including plans for the building that was formerly the Catford Conservative Club, would be provided. It was noted that the owners of the pub operating from the site, who paid a peppercorn rent, did not pay the London Living Wage and were not maintaining the building very well as per their rental agreement.

16. Communications

It was accepted that the Council needed to communicate its successes better and that communications could have more of a political edge. A new Head of Strategy and a new Head of Communications were now in place. It was clear that officers with press experience and digital skills were needed. There had been a number of recent positive communication examples including the council tax letter, the communications around the proposed landlord licensing scheme, parking charges communications and the use of hoarding to promote positive messages around development sites. Councillors must be kept

in the loop so they could promote communications messages via social media.

17. Asset Management

The Mayor would provide an update on any plans for the Willow Way site and options for its future use; in addition to an update on the establishment of a comprehensive digital register of council owned assets.

5.3 **RESOLVED:** That a referral to Mayor and Cabinet be made, outlining the further information requested by the Committee:

- ***Webcasting meetings***

To provide an update on whether the web-casting support hours that have been purchased by the Council can be used later this year once webcasting comes into practice (i.e. if the timeframe for using the purchased support can be extended).

- ***Under 5 Base***

To provide an update on the maintenance of the under 5 base on Bellingham Green by Eco Communities.

- ***Plastic recycling***

To confirm the arrangements for plastic recycling processing and seek assurances on how and where it is processed.

- ***Private Renters union***

To provide an update on progress in establishing a Private Renters Union.

- ***Catford Masterplan***

To provide a timeline for the early phase of the regeneration programme, including plans for the building that was formerly the Catford Conservative Club.

- ***Green and food waste***

To provide an update on why this is currently being collected together and when this interim phase might end and clearer separation put in place.

- ***Willow Way site***

To provide an update on any plans for the Willow Way site and options for its future use.

- ***Asset Register***

To provide an update on the establishment of a comprehensive digital register of council owned assets.

6. Referrals to Mayor & Cabinet

6.1 A referral was made in relation to the item on the agenda entitled "Q&A Session with the Mayor".

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chair:

Date:
