

# MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 21 January 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Patrick Codd (Vice-Chair), Obajimi Adefiranye, Abdeslam Amrani, Suzannah Clarke, Mark Ingleby, Louise Krupski, Alan Smith and James-J Walsh

APOLOGIES: Councillor Pauline Morrison

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Alan Hall, Councillor Aisling Gallagher, Councillor Brenda Dacres (Cabinet Member for Safer Communities), Councillor Sophie McGeevor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport), Councillor Jonathan Slater (Cabinet Member for Community Sector), Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), Kheng Chau (Senior Planning Lawyer), Erik Nilsen (Principal Planning Officer), Martin O'Brien (Climate Resilience Manager), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration & Environment), David Syme (Strategic Planning Manager) and Emma Talbot (Director of Planning)

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019

- 1.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 be agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 Councillor Krupski declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item five as a member of Lewisham Cyclists.
- 2.2 Councillor Ingleby declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item five as the Chair of the Friends of Grove Park nature reserve.
- 2.3 Councillor Curran declared a non-prejudicial interests as a trustee of the Baring Trust and as a Member of the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum.

## 3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet

- 3.1 The Committee received the response to its referral as part of the consideration of item six.

## 4. Development of the climate emergency action plan

- 4.1 Martin O'Brien (Climate Resilience Manager) introduced a presentation appended to the minutes, the following key points were noted:
  - The report provided an update on the work the Council was carrying out in response to its declaration of a climate emergency.
  - Work had been commissioned to assess the measures required for Lewisham to become carbon neutral by 2030.
  - A number of authorities across the country had declared a climate emergency. 26 authorities in London had declared an emergency and 14 had set a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
  - Officers were working towards producing an action plan for presentation to Mayor and Cabinet before the end of March.

- The research commissioned by the Council helped to: define definitions; establish a clear baseline for future comparisons; determine the scale and the cost of actions needed to deliver on the Council's ambitions.
- The research did not provide the details of the Council's action plan, which would be agreed in due course.
- The report provided definitions of the key terms (including: 'carbon neutral', 'carbon offsetting' and the international greenhouse protocols for sources of emissions inside and outside of the borough). The terms 'carbon emissions and CO<sub>2</sub>' were used in the report to cover all greenhouse gasses (such as methane, amongst others), measured as carbon equivalents.
- The baseline for measurements was 2017-18. The target year for the action plan was 2030-31.
- The reduction in carbon emissions in Lewisham from 2005 to the present day was 38%, which was slightly higher than the London average (37%). Much of the reduction related to the decarbonisation of electricity supplied through the national grid.
- Emissions directly attributable to Lewisham Council amounted to slightly less than 3%.
- Domestic gas and electricity accounted for more than half of the borough's carbon emissions.
- Transport was the next biggest source of emissions, together with gas and electricity used in housing the three amounted to three quarters of the borough's carbon emissions.
- The research puts forward four scenarios for the future (baseline; core; radical stretch and systemic change). These took into account the projections for population growth as well as the plans for decarbonisation of the electricity grid.
- Actions had been developed for each of the scenarios.
- The four scenarios were complementary – the actions in each could be added to the actions from the previous scenario.
- Projections were made for the impact of each of the scenarios – with costs for carbon offsetting.
- There were significant costs associated with the delivery of each of the four scenarios.
- The Greater London Authority had produced an assessment of the costs of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. It found that the 'do nothing' option was not the cheapest scenario.
- The costs of some of the actions in the 'systemic change' scenario could not be accurately projected because they were so fundamentally different from current practice.
- One of the key unsolved problems was the carbon emissions from domestic heating.
- There were some sources of carbon emissions that could not be quantified locally (such as those from aviation).
- There was a sizable amount of emissions from road transport in the borough for journeys that began and ended outside of the borough.
- The Council had to be ambitious and needed to demonstrate leadership.
- The issue of climate change was an issue of social justice. The most vulnerable people in society would be those most likely to be adversely

affected by extreme weather events as well as increases in prices of commodities and the inability to get insurance.

- There was often a sense of 'doom and gloom' about the impacts of climate change. It was important not to lose sight of the level of threat being faced but also to recognise that people needed positive and compelling reasons for change.
- The carbon neutral target could not be delivered by the Council alone – a key part of the action plan would be lobbying government for support, funding and legislative changes.
- Delivery of the plan would rely on a broad level of culture change across the organisation, with the Council's partners and amongst residents.

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

- The importance of green infrastructure was recognised as part of the Council's overall approach to sustainability.
- Tree planting would not provide a solution to the issues posed by climate change but it could be a worthwhile contribution to achieving the Council's aims.
- Actions relating to trees and green infrastructure would be included in the action plan.
- The consultants had attempted to quantify the contribution that trees and green infrastructure could make to the carbon neutral target – but this was not uncomplicated.
- Standards for new buildings required increased levels of energy efficiency. There was a significant challenge in relation to the efficiency of existing housing, where there was a pressing need for new solutions.
- Efforts (and funding) should be prioritised for the most vulnerable households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- The Council would lobby government on the support available for private homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Work would also need to take place to encourage homeowners to invest in the efficiency of their homes.
- Significant amounts of money were spent by homeowners on kitchens and bathrooms – and there were sizable industries supporting this investment. The home efficiency market was 'malfunctioning'. The government should invest in the skills for this sector and consumers should be better supported to make positive choices.
- There were opportunities for investment which would release savings over time. The costs of energy were set to increase – which was why 'doing nothing' was not a sustainable option.
- The action plan would be delivered over ten years. Some actions would be identified and could be delivered immediately but others would take longer and would be longer term and broader in their scope.
- Existing expenditure would need to be directed towards more sustainable ways of working.
- It was not clear how the government was going to meet its own carbon reduction targets.
- The South East London Heat and Power plant (SELCHP) could provide a readymade source of heating, but most of the heat generated is not be

used. This was something the Council was seeking to change, working with Veolia who operate the SELCHP plant. Feasibility studies had been carried out with the operators and further work would take place to determine how best to make use of this resource.

- Some work was also taking place across the borough to ascertain the opportunities for decentralised energy generation.
- The research did not present a commitment to offset the borough's carbon emissions. Rather – it provided an illustration of what it would mean for the borough to become carbon neutral. The issue of offsetting would have to be revisited throughout the course of the action plan and a final decision would be made in 2030-31.
- The immediate focus of the action plan would be the actions that could be taken immediately and the culture change that would be required to deliver the scale of the longer term changes that would be needed.

4.3 Councillor Sophie McGeevor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport) addressed the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- One hectare of trees was estimated to contain 430 tonnes of carbon. Lewisham's baseline for carbon emissions was 805 thousand tonnes of carbon. Blackheath, which was one of the largest green spaces in London was 85 hectares – which, even if it was covered with fast growing trees would only mitigate the equivalent of 36.5 thousand tonnes of carbon.
- Trees and green cover were important for biodiversity, for shading and for improving the pedestrian environment but they would not provide a solution for Lewisham's carbon emissions.
- It was important to recognise that planting trees would not allow people to carry on doing things as they were. Major changes were needed.
- The climate forum meeting that was being planned at the end of January would be the first trial of a number of events engaging with residents on the climate emergency.

4.4 Two Members of 'Climate Action Lewisham' addressed the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- The information in the consultant's report was selective and took somewhat of a narrow view about the role of trees in mitigating climate change.
- The assessment of the role of trees had been overly simplified in the report. For example – no reference had been made to the potentially significant role of trees in reducing energy consumption for heating in adjacent buildings.
- Trees could also help to mitigate the impact of urban heating. This was particularly significant given the projections for global heating (meaning that by 2050 London would be the same temperature as present day Barcelona). This would result in new demands for cooling and air conditioning.
- The development of new green infrastructure took many years. Climate Action Lewisham had put together some proposals for urban tree planting – which would be at low cost to the Council.

- Residents in Lewisham were very interested in the climate emergency. Members of the group found that very few people knew that the Council had declared a climate emergency.
  - The Council needed to do more to engage with local people. The event that was being planned for the end of January had sold out very quickly.
- 4.5 A member of the public was invited to address the Committee on behalf of the Sydenham Society and the Bell Green Masterplan - the following key point was noted:
- The Committee had been approached to consider the options for the development of a heat storage project using the former Bell Green gas holders which is currently the subject of a feasibility study by the government department Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and concerns were raised that an opportunity could be lost to do something innovative.
- 4.6 Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment) addressed the Committee, the following key points were noted:
- The sums of money outlined in the report were significant – but they were still likely to be an underestimate of the amounts needed to deliver on the ambitions to make Lewisham carbon neutral.
  - Whilst money was important – it would require everyone – including residents and the government to work together to bring about significant changes to every aspect of modern life.
  - Collective efforts could bring about rapid changes.
- 4.7 In Committee discussions the following key points were also noted:
- There were concerns expressed about the sustainability and ethics of carbon offsetting.
  - There were issues with the sustainability of wide scale use of bio-gas and bio fuels.
  - There were options of solar heating water that were cost effective.
  - The planting of trees would signal the Council's intent to tackle climate change. There was also funding available from regional and national government as well as from individuals to plant trees and to improve Lewisham's streetscape.
  - Committee Members reiterated the importance of tree planting.
  - People could make small changes, such as lowering their heating and exercising at home to save on heating costs.
  - The Association for Public Service Excellence had produced a report on climate change, to which Members may wish to refer.
- 4.8 **Resolved:** that the Committee would refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows –
- The Committee believes that the climate emergency action plan should place a high level of emphasis on public engagement.
  - The Committee wants to highlight the importance of tree planting and green infrastructure in: urban cooling; enhancing the thermal efficiency of buildings; improving the pedestrian environment and streetscape as well as sequestering carbon emissions from the atmosphere. It recommends

that further consideration should be given to the importance of trees and green space in the climate emergency action plan.

## **5. Draft Lewisham Local Plan**

5.1 The Chair thanked officers for the report and welcomed the level of engagement that had been carried out with councillors in the development of the draft plan.

5.2 Emma Talbot (Director of Planning) and David Syme (Strategic Planning Manager) introduced the report – the following key points were noted:

- Officers welcomed the level of engagement from Councillors. Consideration was given to involving Councillors and the public above and beyond the minimum requirements in the Council's statement of community involvement.
- The report was still in draft form – and agreement was being sought for the next stage of consultation.
- The plan set out proposals for good growth and the development of strategic infrastructure.
- There were still a number of stages of preparation, decision making and consultation for the report to go through before it could be submitted for examination by the planning inspector.
- The draft plan brought together a number of previous planning documents, including: the core strategy, the site allocations plan, the development management policies and the previous local plan.
- Part one of the new plan set out the vision for the borough, this had been developed with the Lewisham's mayor's office to reflect the corporate strategy. This section also set out the strategic objectives (which had been agreed by all members).
- Part two of the plan set out the development management policies – which would govern the determination of planning applications in the borough. Members had previously received a briefing on key changes and the effectiveness of previous policy. Where possible, suggestions from Members had been incorporated into the new policies.
- The policies also had to align with national and regional policy changes.
- The policies strengthened Lewisham's approach to climate change.
- Part three of the plan set out the approach to Lewisham's neighbourhoods and places.
- The approach to neighbourhoods and places had been developed in line with the Committee's recommendations – as well as consultation with local communities.
- Parts four and five of the plan contained technical information.
- The public consultation on the plan would build on best practice and experience from recent consultation exercises. The strategy for the delivery of the consultation was taking longer than anticipated.
- As proposed by the Committee, officers were developing an executive summary of the plan to make it as accessible as possible.

5.3 Emma Talbot, David Syme, and Eric Nilsen (Principal Planning Policy Officer) responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:

- Officers recognised the issue of people paving over their driveways with non-permeable materials – when combined with the impacts of climate change would increase the risk of flooding. However, permitted development rights allowed people to make a number of changes to their homes without applying for planning permission.
- There was a specific policy in the plan on sustainable drainage systems – which was part of the overall approach in the plan to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Where the Council had power to rule on a planning application (work not carried out under permitted development rights) the development management policy specified permeable paving materials for driveways.
- Consideration was being given to the ways in which the plan should respond to the emerging climate emergency. The plan would be reviewed every five years, which would allow policy to adapt to the Council's approach to the climate emergency.
- The planning system could not stop people from running down a pub as a business. The policy proposed in the plan put in place measures to protect pubs from development but there were limits to what could be achieved through the local plan.
- Further consideration would be given to the other options for the provision of support to businesses in the borough.
- Officers had taken on board the Committee's suggestions about the protection of pubs. There were also policies in the plan that supported the night-time economy more broadly.
- Officers recognised the strategic importance of the green corridor in Lee Green and Grove Park.
- There was specific policy in the plan to support the improvement of the 'linear network of green space' in the east of the borough.
- There had been an increase in the number of enforcement officers in planning and the team was growing.
- It was recognised that the plan would be inherited by the borough's young people. Options were being explored for further engagement with young people.
- Planning officers had been working with colleagues in the transport team to develop the transport section of the plan. Further consideration would be given to the target for electric vehicle charging infrastructure in new buildings.
- The London plan cycle parking standards would apply to the local plan. Additional reference could be made to the capacity for securing cargo bikes.
- Officers would check whether developers of student accommodation were exempt from making community infrastructure levy payments.
- The local plan could not address the issues raised by members regarding leaseholders.
- Work was taking place with officers across the Council to ensure that the digital infrastructure was in place to support future housing and business growth.

- The likely impact of the expansion of the ultra-low emission zone was as yet unknown.
- Work was taking place to deal with problems caused by the ‘street clutter’ of abandoned phone boxes and signs.
- The plan identified areas of deficiency of play space in the borough.
- There were proposals in the plan to increase the volume of ‘playable public realm’ which provided informal spaces for play and recreation for people of all ages.
- Officers did not believe that the positioning of letter boxes in new buildings could be addressed in the local plan.
- Further work would take place with officers in the Council’s regeneration team to develop the borough’s civic strategy.
- Officers would consider the location of the designation of Hither Green local centre in the plan.
- Issues raised by Members at planning committees were recorded and reported in the annual monitoring report.

5.4 In Committee discussions the following key points were also noted:

- Members expressed support for increasing the protections on Lewisham’s pubs – particularly those that were in listed buildings.
- Concerns were expressed about the designation of new conservation areas because of the potential limitations on the installation of solar panels and external cladding (to improve energy efficiency).
- Members welcomed the consideration that had been given to climate change in the plan.
- Members would welcome inclusion of infrastructure for cargo bikes in the borough.
- Members asked that the lessons learnt from the development of the Catford regeneration masterplan regarding place shaping would be built into the work on the A21 corridor supplementary planning document.
- Members reiterated support for the ‘Urban National Park’ initiative centred around Grove Park nature reserve.
- Members would welcome further detail about the designation of Catford as the civic heart of the borough.
- Officers agreed with Members concerns about the impact of ‘General Permitted Development Rights’ and the poor quality of some of the housing delivered under these rights. It could not be referenced in the local plan because by definition it fell outside of the scope of the plan.
- The Council recognised the value of trees and planning officers resisted tree loss wherever possible.
- Further consideration could be given to the issue of sound proofing in homes in multiple occupation. It was important not to duplicate rules already in place through building control regulations.

5.5 The following key points made by Councillors attending under standing orders (Councillors Hall and Gallagher) were noted:

- Members from Bellingham ward were supportive of the Bell Green community masterplan.
- There were concerns about protection for listed buildings in Bell Green, including the Liversey Hall.



- Further work should take place to manage traffic in Bell Green – in order to improve air quality and the environment.
- The need for NHS services should be recognised in the local plan. This should include the future of the Sydenham Green health centre.
- The designation of the Bellingham estate as a conservation area would be welcomed.
- There were concerns about the height and massing of buildings being proposed (and permitted) along the Bromley Road because of the impact on the surrounding residential areas.
- There was a pressing need for social housing – that was truly affordable.
- Members would welcome preference being given in the plan to social housing rather than shared ownership.
- Consideration should be given to lowering the threshold for provision of affordable housing in new developments (to lower than 10 units – as at present).
- Stronger policy on ‘tenure blind’ housing and common entrances would be welcomed – given the issues that had been identified with some developments segregating types of housing.

5.6 Emma Talbot, David Syme and Erik Nilsen responded to questions from Members attending the meeting under standing orders – the following key points were noted:

- Officers were supportive of community plans for Bell Green. The area had been identified as an opportunity area – and potentially a new district centre for the south of the borough. Any plans made by the Council would incorporate the community masterplan for the area and would include local councillors.
- It was recognised that at present the environment around Bell Green was not welcoming.
- There was not specific detail in the plan about the scale and massing of buildings along the Bromley Road – however – work was beginning on the development of plans for the A21 corridor. This would give consideration to: public realm improvements; scale and massing of buildings; density of housing and social infrastructure. It was intended that this would result in the development of a new supplementary planning document for this area.
- Officers had worked hard, in consultation with the Mayor and Cabinet Member to create a strong policy on social housing – that could be justified in planning terms. The plan was specific about Lewisham’s definition of social housing.
- The infrastructure delivery plan that had been prepared alongside the local plan set out the requirements for the infrastructure required to deliver the ambitions in the local plan.
- Consideration could be given to making the Bellingham Estate a conservation area.
- The plan set out the existing conservation areas in the borough – it also identified ‘areas of special character’, which were areas that might become conservation areas in the future.

- It would not be possible to say that shared ownership was not acceptable in new developments – but the plan could state a preference based on need.
- Viability assessments indicated that affordable housing could be provided in housing developments of less than ten units. Consideration would be given to the wording in the plan regarding the preference of including affordable housing on site (rather than making a contribution to affordable housing off site).
- Further consideration would be given to the minimum standards for ceiling heights in new developments – to achieve the maximum possible.
- Officers had reviewed other borough's local plans and examples of best practice.

5.7 Emma Talbot responded to a question from about consultation with the community – the following key points were noted:

- Officers intended to carry out further work with local communities to develop the visions for their areas.
- It was correct that there was no requirement for developers to consult with the local community – and when they did consult – there was no requirement for them to do it well. Officers used the pre-application process to work with developers and encourage best practice.
- Work was also taking place through the local democracy review to ensure that there was good engagement through all parts of the planning process – from policy to the submission of applications.
- Development management policy in the new plan highlighted to developers that the Council would look more favourably on planning applications that demonstrated active engagement with local communities.

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

- The Committee commends the work that has been carried out by officers in developing the draft local plan. It particularly welcomes the engagement that has been carried out with councillors.
- The Committee recommends that there should be greater emphasis in the new plan on the 'Urban National Park' initiative which is proposed in the south of the borough.
- That when deciding on designating a new conservation area - careful consideration should be given to the potential impact on residents' future ability to install energy saving features (such as solar panels and external insulation).
- The Committee would welcome stronger enforcement activity to protect the borough's heritage assets and listed buildings. It is particularly concerned about the borough's historic pubs.
- The Committee recommends that funding for planning enforcement should be maintained and, where possible, strengthened.
- The Committee recommends that officers give further consider about how best to protect the borough's trees.
- The Committee is concerned about the impact of impermeable paving on flood risk in the borough. It recommends that officers should investigate

the options for removing permitted development rights for paving on front gardens in order to ensure that permission is only given for sustainable permeable paving.

- The Committee recommends that further consideration should be given to ensuring that affordable housing for students is allocated to those who are most in need.

## 6. Surrey Canal Triangle supplementary planning document

6.1 David Syme introduced the report (including the response to the Committee's referral to Mayor and Cabinet) – the following key points were noted:

- As the Committee had been previously advised - consultation had been carried out on the draft supplementary planning document design framework.
- There had been relatively few responses to the consultation – particularly from members of the public (this was likely due to the industrial nature of much of the area covered by the plan).
- Amongst the responses that had been received – the common theme was that people wanted development to go ahead – so that they could benefit from the improvements and facilities that had been promised (such as the new station on the London Overground).
- Responses from statutory consultees had been incorporated into the plan.

6.2 David Syme responded to a question from the Committee – the following key point was noted:

- The Council supported the protection for the Lions Centre because of the valuable facilities it provided to the community. Any loss would have to be justified in policy – which would mean that the facilities needed to be re-provided on site. Suggestions in the consultation that existing protections should be removed had been dismissed.

6.3 **Resolved:** that the report (and the response from Mayor and Cabinet) be noted.

## 7. Select Committee work programme

7.1 The Committee discussed the work programme and agreed that the following items should be on the agenda for the meeting on 10 March:

- Flood risk update
- Catford town centre regeneration
- Parks and open spaces strategy
- Parks management review final report

7.2 The Committee also agreed that it would receive an information item about the performance of the waste and recycling service.

7.3 **Resolved:** that the work programme be agreed.

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

8.1 **Resolved:** That the Committee's comments under items four and five should be referred to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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