

**Minutes of the Sustainable Development Select Committee
Tuesday, 18 January 2022 at 7.00pm**

In attendance: Councillors Louise Krupski (Chair), James-J Walsh (Vice-Chair), Leo Gibbons and Mark Ingleby

Also joining the meeting virtually: Councillors Suzannah Clarke and Jimi Adefiranye

Also present: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager); Jennifer Daothong (Executive Director for Housing Regeneration and Public Realm) (online)

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021
 - 1.1 Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 be agreed as an accurate record.
2. Declarations of interest
 - 2.1 There were none.
3. Responses from Mayor and Cabinet
 - 3.1 The Chair welcomed Jennifer Daothong (Executive Director for Housing Regeneration and Public Realm) to her first meeting of the select committee in her (recently appointed) new role. Members were asked to note the response from Mayor and Cabinet emissions-based short stay and motorcycle parking charge.
 - 3.2 Jennifer Daothong (Executive Director for Housing Regeneration and Public Realm) responded to questions from the Committee about the prioritisation of road and pavement uses and the placement of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
4. Budget reductions report
 - 4.1 Jennifer Daothong introduced the budget reductions report – noting the challenging financial environment and the measures being taken by the Council to balance its budget and control overspending. She highlighted the costs of the response to the global coronavirus pandemic and its impact on business rates and council tax collection.
 - 4.2 Jennifer Daothong responded to questions from the Committee – the following key points were noted:
 - The Council is in a difficult financial position – but it continues to prioritise support to the most vulnerable.
 - Consideration is being given to working with other authorities and stakeholders to share costs and manage risks.
 - Council staff are suffering from the same exhaustion and problems as everyone as a result of the pandemic. In addition, those working in frontline services had faced particular challenges in the course of their work.
 - Consideration was given to inflationary costs associated with planning new

developments and projects.

4.3 Jennifer Daothong introduced the individual savings proposals that had been allocated to the select committee and responded to questions – the following key points were noted:

- Further information would be provided about the proposals to invest in the commercial estate.
- Officers were taking a holistic approach to the commercial estate. Officers worked to balance the requirement to keep the Council on a sustainable footing – with its intention to support the economic development of the borough.
- Further information could be provided to the Committee about the review of the commercial estate. Consideration would be given about the scale of information provided in public and the need to protect confidential commercial information.
- Any revenue made from fines for traffic enforcement had to be spent on enforcement and highways.
- Where possible, as part of the implementation of new enforcement measures for yellow boxes - consideration would be given to making junctions safer.
- It was important to address climate change now – rather than later as part of an ‘invest to save’ approach.
- Officers would work with members on the approach to maximising income from the commercial estate.

4.3 In Committee discussion – members highlighted their concerns about the financial pressures facing the Council – and noted their exasperation with the government’s approach to funding local government. Members were encouraged by the consideration being given to the use of the commercial estate.

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

- The Committee notes the scale of the challenge facing the Council and it recognises the difficulties facing officers in proposing these cuts. It also recognises and commends the work of officers as they deliver day to day services as well as responding to the ongoing effects of the pandemic and giving consideration to sustainable options for making significant reductions in Council expenditure.
- Members recommend that the Public Accounts Select Committee should give further consideration to proposal D10 (Commercial estate review) - with further information provided by officers on the assumptions made about the potential return on investment. The Committee is concerned that – in the absence of detailed figures – it is unable to determine whether the implications of the proposal have been adequately assessed.
- The Committee recommends that consideration should be given to the level of subsidy that is provided for organisations through rental agreements in the commercial estate. In the interests of transparency, the Committee would welcome assurance that consideration has been given to making the best return on all properties – with reasons given (in line with Council’s strategy for asset optimisation) for any subsidies or reductions.
- In reference to making the best use of the Council’s assets – and taking a strategic approach to regeneration, the Committee notes the motion on ‘unlocking the potential of local high streets’ agreed by the full Council in July 2021 ([link to the motion on the Council's website](#)).

- The Committee recommends that every endeavour should be made to ensure that the implementation of proposal F25 (Road safety – new yellow boxes) is carried out carefully and sensitively. Furthermore, the Committee asks that – as part of the implementation of this proposal - every consideration be given to options for improving the pedestrian and cycling environment.

5. Select Committee work programme

5.1 The Committee discussed the work programme for the final meeting of the municipal year.

5.2 **Resolved:** that the work programme for the meeting on 17 February 2022 be agreed.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chair:

Date:
