

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 9 September 2013
at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Catherine Bowman (Chair)
Councillor Gavin Edwards (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor Dan Garfield
Councillor David Hubber
Councillor Rebecca Lury
Councillor Paul Noblet
Councillor The Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Geoffrey Thornton

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Fiona Colley, Cabinet Member, Regeneration & Corporate Strategy

ALSO PRESENT: Jeremy Leach, Chair, Walworth Society

OFFICER SUPPORT: Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Tim Cutts, Team Leader, Planning Policy
Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement
Debbi Gooch, Head of Litigation
Graeme Gordon, Director of Corporate Strategy
Stephen Platts, Director of Regeneration
Peter Roberts, Scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Coyle and Lorraine Lauder and, for lateness, from Councillor The Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

- 2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings of the committee held on 8 and 22 July 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW - COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY, REGENERATION & CORPORATE STRATEGY

5.1 Councillor Colley reported that the council was close to gaining vacant possession of the Heygate estate and that demolition would commence in the New Year. Stephen Platts, Director of Regeneration, added that a method statement had been drawn up for the demolition. The contract would commence at the end of September and begin in the vacant parts of the estate with blocks being taken down piece by piece from the top. Councillor Colley also reported that the leisure centre was due to open in early 2015. She explained that the council and Transport for London (TfL) had agreed to the removal of the northern roundabout and to an escalator solution for the upgrade of the Northern Line ticket hall. In response to questions she informed the committee that a detailed proposal about cycling routes was expected from TfL. Councillor Colley emphasised that TfL were now committed to investing £70m in the works necessary for the regeneration project.

5.2 Councillor Colley updated the committee on the David Bratby murals in the northern pedestrian underpasses at the Elephant & Castle. The council was investigating what was feasible with some form of digital saving as the worst case option. The Director of Regeneration added that currently it was not clear who owned the murals. A member asked whether any part of the underpasses could be kept open rather than permanently closing them as a whole. Councillor Colley responded that the practicalities would have to be properly explored and stressed that the land at the entrance was necessary in order to make the new area of public realm workable.

5.3 Councillor Colley reported positive news in respect of the shopping centre. Given the additional funding from TfL and the proposed peninsularisation of the roundabout it had been agreed with the GLA and St Modwen that the centre should be demolished. Discussions were continuing about the redevelopment. The Director of Regeneration stated that the council would be working on an open book basis with St Modwen in order to explore what could be achieved. In response to questions about the recent change of direction, Councillor Colley clarified that the transport solution had largely contributed to this, meaning that it now made more sense to demolish the shopping centre rather than redevelop it. The Director of Regeneration commented that, as the proposals to refurbish the centre were developed, the council had become less and less satisfied that refurbishment

would deliver the quality new town centre for Elephant & Castle to which the council aspired. St Modwen was addressing the various leasehold interests within the shopping centre and looking for a partner in the redevelopment.

- 5.4 Members asked for any further details about the peninsularisation work. Councillor Colley responded that TfL had allocated the funding and was moving ahead with traffic modelling. The Director of Regeneration explained that the road network, including cycle and bus routes, would have to be addressed before work was begun on the new escalators for the Underground. Councillor Colley added that TfL was taking a co-ordinated approach, recognising that St George's Road, London Road, Blackfriars Road and the Elephant & Castle needed to be seen as linked projects. A member suggested that TfL be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee, when a more advanced stage of planning had been reached, in order to provide a timeline for the development.
- 5.5 The chair of the committee asked what was in place to structure the council's relationship with TfL. The Director of Regeneration explained that a strategic development group set the model for transport improvement. To date only the principles had been agreed, consultation on the detail of schemes would begin later this year. Once a scheme had been adopted a delivery mechanism would be agreed with TfL. A lot of the council's contributions would come through Section 106 improvements, giving the council some financial control. The Director of Regeneration commented that the London Mayor had associated himself with the Elephant & Castle road scheme. Councillor Colley agreed that this reflected the GLA's commitment to the Elephant & Castle.
- 5.6 In response to further questions, the Director of Regeneration confirmed that currently no improvement was planned to the exchange between the Northern and Bakerloo lines. Councillor Coley pointed out that this would have added at least an extra £100m to the cost of transport improvements. A member drew attention to the interchange between the Network Rail and both Underground lines being through the shopping centre. Councillor Colley emphasised the need for an easy, clear and attractive pedestrian route to serve as the interchange.
- 5.7 The chair raised concerns about the information made available to planning committee members, particularly around viability of schemes. Councillor Colley indicated that a new protocol was being proposed, including planning committee members being able to inspect viability documents in advance. She agreed to review progress on the protocol and commented that she also was keen that planning reports provide more information. A member asked for the current situation in respect of the Information Commissioner's decision on Lend Lease's Elephant & Castle viability assessment. Councillor Colley reported that the council had lodged an appeal against the decision and expected a hearing in January. She was concerned whether developers would be willing to continue to share commercially sensitive information with the council.
- 5.8 A member asked the cabinet member whether she felt that accepting commuted sums in lieu of affordable housing was consistent with the council's aim of ensuring mixed communities. Councillor Colley stressed that the council's first choice was affordable housing on site, its second choice was affordable housing off-site and then its third choice was a commuted sum. It was doubtful whether some sites,

such as those along the river, would produce genuinely affordable housing. An alternative was for the council to accept significant sums that would allow it to provide council housing. A lot of new affordable housing was being provided across the borough. The Director of Regeneration stated that the council had to balance competing needs. The income for the housing investment programme was generated by capital receipts. Councillor Colley emphasised this balance, that there were always competing issues of quality and quantity, a massive need to invest in Southwark housing estates and a massive housing waiting list.

- 5.9 A member asked whether the council was able to charge the rents it wished for housing on its own land, as opposed to 80% of the market rent level.. Councillor Colley responded that the council's own developments would follow council rent policies and that under a procurement agreement on the Aylesbury Estate the council was determining future rents and the type of tenancy. If the council sold land it had less control over how the land was developed although it was still the planning process that determined what was built. The council had made a lot of representations to have local discretion to cap affordable rents at less than 80% of the market rent but the London Mayor had not agreed to this. The council was taking legal advice on the possibility of a judicial review of this issue. In Councillor Colley's view it was important to retain the council's policy and the sequential test in respect of affordable housing as a challenge to developers and an aid in the council's negotiations.
- 5.10 A member suggested that the planning policies for the Elephant & Castle needed to be more specific in terms of new school and health provision, in response to the expected growth in population. Councillor Colley commented that this was always a challenge, particularly in terms of health authorities being able to commit to long-term plans. The council was looking at the provision of community space, including the possible use of the old Walworth Town Hall building. Consultation on use of the old town hall would start in October. Councillor Colley stressed the difficulty of planning for school places, made more difficult by the arrival of free schools, but drew attention to the primary school strategy report. The Director of Regeneration indicated that the council was in conversation with the health authority about the expansion and relocation of GP surgeries. Councillor Colley added that the council was ready to find a solution with the health authority.
- 5.11 Councillor Colley updated the committee on the art works box park. This would be moving from the junction of Walworth Road and Wansey Street to the junction with elephant Road, allowing it to remain longer on the one site. A member raised the issue of a row of plane trees in the area. Councillor Colley asked for details to be sent to her so that she could find out more information from the planners.
- 5.12 Councillor Colley clarified the council spend on the Elephant & Castle regeneration to date. This included demolition costs which would be refunded by Lend Lease in June, leaseholder acquisitions, interests that had to be bought out and other small capital projects.
- 5.13 A member asked for an update on the Aylesbury regeneration procurement process. Councillor Colley explained that this was progressing well and was down to two possible bidders with whom the council was in active discussions and working towards the submission of best and final offers. Designs for the next

phases were also being developed. The council hoped to enter a contract three or four months from the decision on the bidders. It was also looking at working with the Creation Trust to explore possible community space.

- 5.14 Members raised concerns about the availability of broadband internet in the Rotherhithe area. Councillor Colley reported that the council had applied unsuccessfully for GLA funding. She had been exploring the broadband infrastructure with the council's planning policy team and possible use of Section 10 funding and the Community Infrastructure Levy. The chair asked that any proposals and a timeline be circulated to the committee for information.
- 5.15 In response to questions, Councillor Colley clarified the proposed building programme for council homes. Southwark's Housing Land Availability Assessment outlined the development capacity within the borough, of the council's own land and other sites. The council had pledged to build around 300 to 350 new council homes per year (last year 600 affordable homes had been built). The first phase of build would be approximately 210 affordable homes with approximately 310 in the second phase. Sites included suggestions made by Tenants' and Residents' Associations, such as underused car parking areas or garages on estates. Councillor Colley confirmed that the balance in terms of property sizes would be in line with the council's planning policy – a large proportion of family homes – but, bearing in mind the bedroom tax, recognising the need for smaller units too. The Director of Regeneration added that where new homes were built on existing estates then 50% of the new properties would be allocated to people already on the estate. Councillor Colley emphasised that there was a need to look beyond infill sites and that the council was looking at partnerships with private developers and housing associations. The council was also achieving its targets in bringing empty private property back into use.
- 5.16 A member asked whether the council had looked at faith community space in the context of regeneration. Councillor Colley replied that the council had been drawing up a faith premises guide, to ensure that groups were aware of planning policies and other requirements. The best position for faith centres was in the town centre where there were better transport links. The council had also helped fund some research by Roehampton University, to look at the demand for faith premises and what premises needed, and Roehampton had recommended the GLA to consider a London-wide policy. Councillor Colley gave an example of a new church at Crossways which would be shared by a number of faith groups.
- 5.17 Members suggested that a planning document was needed for the Old Kent Road. Councillor Colley stated that a vision for the Old Kent Road would be included in the new Southwark Plan. The road held a lot of potential but there were infrastructure issues about which the council was in discussion with the GLA and TfL. Members also asked about expected profit from the Potter's Field regeneration. The Director of Regeneration clarified that the council would receive a substantial share of profit in the next financial year when flats were sold. Councillor Colley confirmed that Berkeley Homes were responsible for finding a cultural user for the development. In response to questions, Councillor Colley also provided an update on the Peckham station redevelopment.

6. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATION RECOGNITION AND GRANTS - UPDATE

- 6.1 The Head of Community Engagement introduced the report. In response to questions he confirmed that the roles of officers within the tenant and resident involvement team had been changed during a recent reorganisation. There had been a shift in emphasis towards supporting tenants' and residents' associations in development. Some members stressed that at annual general meetings officers should be offering support and gathering information, rather than directing how meetings should be run.
- 6.2 Members welcomed the comment at paragraph 10 of the report in relation to an online application process. The Head of Community Engagement indicated that this would be coming on line soon. Given changes in demographics and the number of leaseholders and sub-lettings, Members asked whether any thought was being given to whether T&RA's were representative of residents on estates. The Head of Community Engagement explained that officers were working with T&RA's on how to increase membership and representativeness. At the same time, the community conversations arising out of the housing commission report had reached a lot of residents who might not usually engage with the council through T&RA's. The council had also explored the use of online forums. A range of options were being provided in order for residents to get involved.
- 6.3 Members asked for details of liaison with ward councillors. The Head of Community Engagement explained that this varied, depending on the individual circumstances of the area and the T&RA. More intensive liaison was offered in particular cases. The Head of Community Engagement stated that a letter had been sent to members letting them know which officer was responsible for which area of the borough. In response to further questions, he clarified that the Homeowners' Council largely sat within the remit of the Home Ownership Unit. Members stressed the need to improve the flow of information between the council and leaseholders.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm