



HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 15 July 2013 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02C - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Michael Bukola (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Claire Hickson
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE
Councillor Graham Neale
Councillor Wilma Nelson
Councillor Martin Seaton
John Nosworthy
Michael Orey

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Mark Williams

OFFICER SUPPORT: Sarah Newman, Principle Environmental Protection Officer
Jonathon Toy, Head of Community Safety & Enforcement
David Littleton, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Business Manager
Fitzroy Williams, Scrutiny Team

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were none.

2. APOLOGIES

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

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

2.1 There were no additional items of business.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the sub-committee held on 1 May 2013 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. NORTHERN LINE EXTENSION

- 5.1 The chair opened the meeting and asked everyone present to introduce themselves. He then asked the Principal Environmental Health Officer to give a environmental view on the report.
- 5.2 The officer reported that joint work is expected to start with Lambeth, Wandsworth and Transport for London (TfL) in the near future. Members were then informed that the relevant officer from planning was unfortunately not available to attend this evenings meeting
- 5.3 The Head of Community Safety & Enforcement undertook to investigate why the sub-committee had not been made aware of the officer change prior to the meeting.
- 5.4 The chair with the agreement of the sub-committee undertook to hear from Chris Porter and Jon Kirkup representative of TfL.
- 5.5 The TfL representatives reported that they were awaiting a final decision from the Secretary of State for Transport who is considering whether a local public inquiry should be held to look at the application. If there is an inquiry, case papers would be submitted by the end of August.
- 5.6 The Secretary of State will appoint an independent inspector to run it. It would probably take place between November 2013 and January 2014 and would last four to five weeks.
- 5.7 Members were informed that TfL were presently in discussions with Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth with a view to agreeing solutions to any arising issues.
- 5.8 In response to a question raised by the chair, the representatives informed the sub-committee that construction noise affecting local residents would be addressed with a noise constraints agreement including all 3 authorities and imposed on the contractors.
- 5.9 Members were also informed that work would need to be carried out 24 hours a day outside the usual times for 9 to 12 weeks, most of the work would be underground.

- 5.10 The sub-committee were informed that a contact telephone number would be displayed for the public and the contractor would have a independent worker who would address any noise complaints.
- 5.11 The vice-chair asked what was the level of engagement with local residents? The representative reported the following:-
- Several events in the Oval area and Durning Library (Lambeth)
 - Leaflets drops around the route area
 - Residential groups meetings
 - Drop in events for local residents
- 5.12 The vice-chair asked if the level of objections raised by local residents been taken onboard? The sub-committee were informed that objections had been taken onboard and TfL had looked at alternative options.
- 5.13 Members were informed that TfL agreed to plans for existing users of the old lodge to be temporarily relocated to another area of the park (including trees, shrubs, bee hives and equipment), whilst construction of the Northern Line Extension (NLE) is underway.
- 5.14 In response to a question raised by a member of the sub-committee, the representative reported that objections had been received from both residents of Kennington Green and Kennington Park (Public Land – Metropolitan open space). The representative informed members that a mock up was available on the website and undertook to circulate this information to members.
- 5.15 A sub-committee members asked approximately how many objections were received? Members were informed that 240 letters of objection were received and 40 letters of support were received.
- 5.16 The sub-committee were informed that contractors would be digging and soil removal would be done at the Battersea end of the tunnel.
- 5.17 The chair raised the point regarding Kennington station providing an exit only provision? The representatives assured members that this would not happen, it is anticipated that 50% more passengers would be changing platforms at Kennington station.
- 5.18 Members were also informed that a number of upgrades were planned for all stations on the northern line due to the increase of traffic and Kennington Station would be getting a number of upgrades leading up to 2020.
- 5.19 The sub-committee were informed that all 3 boroughs were

negotiating with TfL for the best deal for local residents.

- 5.20 The chair undertook to discuss with officers the possibilities of a special meeting to discuss the Northern Line Extension.

RESOLVED:

That the sub-committee carry this item of business over to its next meeting for an officer update.

6. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

- 6.1 This item of business was introduced to the sub-committee by councillor Mark Williams (Deputy Cabinet Member for Private Rented Sector Housing) and David Littleton the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Business Unit Manager.
- 6.2 Councillor Williams reported that the current overview in Southwark was that local pressures were impacting on the quality of accommodation in some parts of the private sector.
- 6.3 Members were informed that the most recent census shows the number of private renters in England and Wales had increased by 88% between 2001 and 2011. It was apparent that regulations are required in Southwark and these should be complemented by a public awareness and education campaign which would explain the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords.
- 6.4 The officer stated that this item of business had been brought to scrutiny so that questions could be asked and possible recommendations could be formulated to help the process.
- 6.5 The sub-committee were informed that the Southwark's Housing Condition Survey (HCS) 2008 reported that there were 77,000 private dwellings in the borough, 22,000 of which were privately rented. Recent data suggested that the Private Rental Sector (PRS) had grown to over 28,000 dwellings. However, the Mayor's Housing Covenant estimates that by 2025, the private rental sector will rise to 37% of the entire housing sector.
- 6.6 Census data 2011 shows that there has been a 98.9% increase in the private rented sector, up from 14,323 in 2001 to 28,493 in 2011 and now counting for nearly one in four households in compared to 13.5% at the time of the 2001 Census.
- 6.7 There is a need to improve standards for the 70,000 residents of this borough when considering there are some very poor conditions that tenants are presently living in i.e. cold, overcrowding and fire risks.

- 6.8 The officer reported that a option of selective licensing was a regulatory tool provided by Section 80 of the Housing Act. This applies to all dwellings in the private rented sector. However a selective licensing scheme can only be implemented if one or two conditions are met. The first relates to low housing demands: The second relates to anti-social behaviour.
- 6.9 The sub-committee were informed that local authorities running a discretionary licensing scheme may choose for landlords to join up to an accreditation scheme, such as the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme, to help landlords improve their management skills.
- 6.10 The officer reported that conditions were changing and not for the better. Supply and demands were increasing, rent controls, housing conditions, overcrowding and fewer protected tenants.
- 6.11 A report would be prepared for the Cabinet meeting in September 2013, and officers would be looking at the scheme being in place and ready in 18 months to 2 years time.
- 6.12 The chair then asked members for questions to the Deputy Cabinet member and officer.
- 6.13 A sub-committee member asked what were the figures for Newham Council scheme? And what was the impact? The officer reported that there was a 75% level of registration for licensing. There are 28,000 private rented properties and 22,000 had been inspected. There was a upfront cost to the council but this area will become self financing and cost saving in time.
- 6.14 Initially they ran a pilot programme targeting 580 homes and ended up prosecuting 257 landlords. Introducing the licensing scheme also produced a reduction in anti-social behaviour of tenants.
- 6.15 A member asked about vulnerable people mentioned in the report i.e. Romanian men and how they could protected? The officer reported that the licensing scheme would be the way to best protect tenants rather than accreditation. People need to understand and know their rights as we don't want tenants to be made homeless.
- 6.16 The sub-committee asked about the budget required? What would the costs be for the 1st, 2nd & 3rd years? The probable start up cost would be approximately £400,000 and the cost would likely be recovered over the life of the scheme.
- 6.17 The officer reported that the objective of the scheme was to make it as easy as possible for landlords to sign up and register,

generally it took 20 minutes during the first 6 months at £30 per license, after the initial period the license fee would be £200-300 for a 5 year license. Generally officers were looking to agree a code across the London boroughs to make this standard.

- 6.18 The aim is for landlords to maintain their properties properly with regards to health and safety of tenants. The licenses would be tied to landlords and not properties, if they fail ultimately they will not be able to rent in the borough.
- 6.19 The vice-chair asked what are the risks and how will the council pay for this project? The Deputy Cabinet member reported that the risk would involve all parties concerned and could be looked at under judicial review, which means every stage needs to be completed properly and underpinned correctly.
- 6.20 The upfront costs of £100,000 – £200,000 may need to come from the council reserves and would become self financing within 5 years, which will result in people living under healthy standards and conditions creating a win situation for everyone concerned.
- 6.21 There are other risks that need to be accounted for and inspections of as many of these properties as possible would need to be undertaken by the appropriate officers especially looking at health and safety aspects of the properties.
- 6.22 A members asked if the Mayor of London been approached about this project? The Deputy Cabinet member reported that the Mayor had been lobbied regarding this subject and had ignored all of these points. It was also pointed out that the Green party and Liberal Democrats had supported this scheme.
- 6.23 A member asked what kind of sanctions could be taken against private landlords? Would enforcement license be the right action for a quick fix? The officer explained that the council cannot use a legal relationship against these individuals, companies have bought properties and use them as they wish, which is not to the good of the community. Standards needs to be introduced and maintained.
- 6.24 The co-opted members reported that there were different categories of landlords and not all leaseholders rented their properties out, but this needed to be curtailed. The leaseholder and council needed to agree a contract as well as a landlord and tenant.
- 6.25 It was also reported that there were 16,500 leaseholders that live in their properties and 8,500 who rent out their properties privately. The member requested that this item be passed to Homeowners Council.

- 6.26 The sub-committee were informed that landlords should be required to meet standards laid down by the council. Council tenants are some of the people being moved in and out of these privately rented properties under temporary accommodation.
- 6.27 The chair stated that details such as legislation and general time scales need to be brought forward and asked if a political view had been sought? The officer reported that local evidence was required, time would be needed and resources made available to provide application processing time of 20 minutes, developing an IT system and increasing staffing to undertake visiting properties, which would provide licenses within a 5 year period. Finally a small project team needs to be set up.
- 6.28 The sub-committee were informed that corporations owning a number of properties could have their licenses revoked as landlords if they were found to be not a fit and proper person. Officers would be communicating with other boroughs to learn from their experiences. It was also reported that the council have highly trained investigators whose aim is to track down and deal anyone who does not comply the borough.
- 6.29 A member asked where will the resources come from? The deputy Cabinet member responded that a decision will be sought by the Cabinet and resources would probably need to come from the council's reserves. It will be a transparent process.
- 6.30 Officers would be working with revenue & customs and the maximum fines to landlords would be a maximum of £20,000 or improve the condition of the property.
- 6.31 The chair stated that he was pleased with item of business and felt the sub-committee could do some good work and make some useful recommendations in support of this item. It was also suggested that members should visit the London Borough of Newham to talk to their officers regarding private rented sector and their experiences as well as gathering information.
- 6.32 A sub-committee member suggested that members should also make arrangements to visit some of the temporary accommodation that the council is presently using in the private rented sector as some are of very poor quality.
- 6.33 The officer reported that the sub-committee could undertake important work specifically on 2 grounds which were:-
- Low demand – housing management
 - Anti-social behaviour – fly tipping, noise

RESOLVED:

That the sub-committee agreed for a update report to the next meeting including anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector with a areas/ward breakdown the report should also contain information on increase cost for leaseholders for anti-social behaviour.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

7.1 The sub-committee agreed after some discussion the following items of business for the work programme 2013-14:-

- Northern Line Extension
- Private Rented Sector
- Work of Community Wardens – Value for Money
- Housing Repairs Major Works across the Borough - Performance
- Draper House - Update
- John Kennedy House - Charges to Leaseholders.

Meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

CHAIR:

DATED: