

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 1 December 2021 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:	Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair) Councillor Victor Chamberlain (Vice-Chair) Councillor Peter Babudu Councillor Jack Buck Councillor Gavin Edwards Councillor Sarah King Councillor Hamish McCallum (Reserve) Councillor Margy Newens Councillor Leanne Werner
OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:	Councillor Helen Dennis, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Councillor Catherine Rose, Cabinet Member for Transport, Parks and Sport
OFFICER SUPPORT:	Norman Coombe, Head of Corporate Team, Legal Services Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Humaira Ali, Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall, Councillor Victoria Olisa, Martin Brecknell (Education co-opted member) and Marcin Jagodzinski (Education co-opted member).

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

There were no additional late items. The chair informed the meeting that information relating to Item 6 – 'Briefing from Cabinet Member for Transport, Parks and Sport – Streetspace Trials' was contained in Supplemental Agenda No. 1.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Victor Chamberlain declared an interest in Item 5, Interview with the Southwark Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade, in particular around any discussion relating to building safety, as he lived in a property impacted by cladding Issues. He reported that a number of members on the committee received a dispensation when the issue of building safety was discussed at the Council Assembly meeting held on 24 November 2021.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5. INTERVIEW WITH THE SOUTHWARK BOROUGH COMMANDER, LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

The committee heard from Nicholas Davis, Southwark Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade. In addressing the committee Nicholas Davis provided the committee with information/updates in respect of the issues as detailed below.

Elephant and Castle Fire

The large scale fire incident at the Elephant and Castle on 29 June 2021, impacting on three commercial units underneath a railway arch which were completely destroyed by the Fire. Six people were treated at the scene by the London Ambulance Service and one person taken to hospital due to smoke inhalation.

Around 600 people were evacuated, mainly from surrounding properties – this was a safety measure in precaution to two cylinders contained in one of the garages. The fire was thought to be accidental, and caused by an electrical fault within one of the workshops.

Following the fire, local crews from Old Kent Road Fire station attended the surrounding residential high rise blocks to offer reassurance and home fire safety advice through leaflets.

Marie Curie Block, SE5

The change from a 'stay put' policy to a simultaneous evacuation policy on the Marie Curie block and the installation of a waking watch to support a simultaneous evacuation. This was introduced following an intrusive survey of the

compartmentation within the block. Inspecting officers, supported by technical engineers carried out a number of audits and had been working with the council towards resolution of the issues.

Nicholas Davis reported that the London Fire Brigade were content that the council had complied with all the relevant guidance, and thanked council staff for being as open and transparent with the Fire Brigade around the issues. There had subsequently been 39 visits to Marie Curie since the issues were identified, and the purpose of those visits were to make sure that the simultaneous evacuation was still in place and the agreed method of detection and notification to residents was still sufficient.

The London Fire Brigade's operation risk database had also been updated with the change in policy from stay put to simultaneous evacuation – this was to ensure that local fire crews having to attend an incident would have the relevant information. LFB had also undertaken some community engagement work and had conducted 22 fire safety visits within the block this year.

Proactive and preventative measures in place around fire safety across the borough

Nicholas Davis clarified the role of LFB in relation to fire safety due to the crossover of responsibility of building owners. For LFB, there were two sides to their fire safety, Regulation and the other, community engagement. The building owner or responsible person was responsible for complying with building regulations and this was mainly done through fire risk assessments (FRAs). Over the last 12 months LFB had completed 588 fire safety visits in the borough of which 494 had been either high risk or vulnerable people, receiving important fire safety advice. Nicholas Davis explained that due to Covid 19, LFB had to adjust how this this was delivered, with a covid risk assessment being undertaken. People were now also being directed to LFBs new online home fire safety checker.

Work was also being undertaken with partners around supporting vulnerable people, through safeguarding referrals, both from LFB and other stakeholders. LFB had also completed 694 visual audits within the last 12 months. Due to the number of buildings that needed to be inspected, crews in fire stations had also been upskilled so that they can complete fire safety checks. It was stressed that they were not fire safety inspection officers, but could provide an early indication of any issues and feed that back to inspecting officers.

Pass out parades with Southwark Cadets were run from the Old Kent Road branch, this had continued through Covid, albeit with smaller pass out parades. School visits had also continued, four had been delivered virtually and had been really successful and one face to face school visit had also been carried out – future bookings to a number of schools had or were being arranged also.

An equality impact assessment had been completed earlier in the year as part of the selection process for the London Fire Brigade's community engagement pilot.

Southwark had been successful and were now one of the nine pilot boroughs within the London Fire Brigade. The aim of the pilot was to engage with the community, residents and local business groups, to get a better understanding of what they needed from the London Fire Brigade. Feedback from the engagement would feed into the Community Risk Management Plan (formerly London Safety Plan). The Southwark Borough Commander and his management team also attended a number of strategic boards and meetings, including the Strategic Building Safety Partnership, the business resilience board, Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards, Safer Neighbourhoods Ward Chairs, London Streetscape and LTNs, and the MARAC Safer Communities Sub Group.

There had been a number of new and updated policies around high rise firefighting, fire survival guidance calls (FSGs), emergency evacuation and mass rescues. The LFB were also equipped with new specialist equipment, including fire escape hoods, new firefighting drones, and smoke blockers (used to secure stairwells that have been compromised with smoke). The Old Kent Road Fire Brigade were due to receive one of the new height extended aerial appliances, which could reach up to 64 metres (20 floors). This would be one of three available in London.

Figures for buildings in the borough with known cladding or related fire safety issues and the measures in place to ensure they do not pose a serious safety hazard

Nicholas Davis clarified that it was the responsibility for the building owner or responsible persons to put in required safety measures and also to arrange for the undertaking of a risk assessment and to take appropriate actions. In relation to the statistics, Nicholas Davis advised that as of 1 December there were 75 blocks within the borough, 16 local authority, 47 housing associations and 12 privately owned blocks. 55 of the blocks were over 80 metres (six floors) and 20 under 18 metres.

Four were classed as ACM clad, 31 that were non ACM cladding issues and 40 that were classed as compartmentation issues. These numbers however changed on a daily basis due to safety measures being undertaken – where works had been undertaken the block would change status from ‘simultaneous evacuation to ‘stay put’. Southwark had the second highest number in London that were in that position, with Tower Hamlets being the borough with more. There was a requirement for each of the blocks in need of repair have to be visited every two weeks to make sure that simultaneous evacuation was still in place and agreed methods of detection and notification to residents was still sufficient and records updated accordingly.

Impact of Covid on the service and response times

Nicholas Davis reported that Covid had had no impact on LFBs attendance to fires. First attendance times were currently at four and half minutes, the brigades current standards was six minutes. The second attendance was currently at five minutes

forty nine seconds, as an average for the last 12 months and the brigade's standard response time was eight minutes. Nicholas Davis was satisfied that the fire brigade were responding in the right amount of time.

Covid had had a limited impact on staffing levels. There were robust risk assessments and good advice to staff.

Fire brigade callouts during Guy Fawkes period

Nicholas Davis report that LFB attended four fires, this was a 50% reduction compared to the previous year.

Number of vehicle fires

LFB had attended 31 vehicle fires over the last 12 months, 12 of which were diesel car fires, with the main cause being the cars overheating. There had been a reduction of 34% of vehicle fires compared to the previous year.

Grenfell Fire Inquiry

Nicholas Davis also reported that the commissioner had been giving evidence at the Grenfell Inquiry. There had been lots of references to the Lakanal fire which he and his team were very aware of and they were seeking to do some focussed on ensuring that the community had some reassurance. Nicholas Davis informed the committee that the Grenfell Tower report had so far made 47 recommendations in total, 29 were directly to LFB or other emergency services, 11 recommendations were aimed at other parties, but also required some action from LFB. There were also a number of recommendations which overlapped organisations, these were slightly harder to address. LFB had completed 23 of the 29 recommendations from phase 1 of the inquiry.

During the presentation, members of the committee asked questions around the following:

- Incident at Dulwich Preparatory School
- Proactive education at work and whether the people targeted is data led
- Any concerns regarding fire safety in any of the new low traffic neighbourhoods
- The work the council was doing to resolve cladding and compartmentation safety issues
- Any concerns over particular owners not taking steps to permanently rectify issues identified
- How London Fire Brigade engaged with the construction industry and developers around improving fire safety issues
- Action being taken to address racism and misogyny within the fire service
- Government pay offer and impact on staff morale
- Raising the profile of careers as opportunities, particularly in the communities that may be underrepresented in the Fire Service at present.

The chair thank Nicholas Davis for his attendance.

6. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, PARKS AND SPORT - STREETSPACE TRIALS

The committee received a presentation from Councillor Catherine Rose, Cabinet Member for Transport, Parks and Sport in relation to the streetspace trials taking place across the borough (a copy of the presentation is viewable on the meeting agenda page).

Following the presentation, questions and discussion were held around the following:

- Ongoing problems on Croxted Road and how Southwark Council will be working with Lambeth Council in respect of this borough boundary road.
- Proliferation of commuter traffic along Walworth Road and Old Kent Road and work being undertaken with TfL to reduce long journeys into the centre of the borough and central London.
- Levels of consultation across the borough on the schemes
- Modal shift across the borough
- Narrative on closures and displacement and who has benefitted
- Communication with residents and lessons learnt
- Expansion of LTN schemes over the next few years and process for deciding where the next schemes will be

The chair thanked Councillor Rose for her attendance.

7. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This item was taken in conjunction with item 8. See item 8 for discussion.

8. EXTINCTION REBELLION SOUTHWARK - SOUTHWARK'S CLIMATE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The committee received a presentation from Eloise and Megan, representatives of Extinction Rebellion Southwark, in relation to the council's climate strategy and action plan (the presentation is available to view on the meeting agenda page).

Eloise informed the committee the Extinction Rebellion Southwark had been engaged with various council processes in the past and have been engaged with policy process since the council first declared a climate emergency and had this year been participating in the New Southwark Plan and trying to bring climate action to the whole council policy. As a national group they were seeking for there to be more citizen assemblies. They had also been supporting the council on the

oversight panel for the Southwark Citizens Jury. Eloise saw the jury as the convening of local experts or people who were passionate about the climate crisis with a broad set of views. Eloise informed the meeting that she had participated in the grading of local authority action plans.

In addressing the overview and scrutiny committee, Extinction Rebellion Southwark highlighted areas where they felt the structure of the council's climate strategy and action plan could be improved, and suggested the following:

- The inclusion of SMART targets and key indicators for each action to enable effective monitoring/scrutiny of performance against the plan, both by the council and external interested groups.
- Outlining potential cost against each action and indicating where funding might come from.
- Aligning the climate action plan with other council policies, such as the New Southwark Plan, Waste Strategy and Movement Plan and having these policies in one place so that they are readily accessible.

Extinction Rebellion Southwark highlighted Hammersmith and Fulham and Newcastle Councils as having good examples of climate strategies.

Extinction Rebellion Southwark suggested that scrutiny councillors undertake training to ensure effective ongoing monitoring of the Climate Action Plan. This was suggested with hindsight of their own experience as a climate emergency interest group having challenges with trying to understand the details of this complex issue.

Extinction Rebellion Southwark also highlighted the need and importance of councillors increasing knowledge and awareness of the climate emergency and being able to speak to the issue of carbon emissions reduction. This was highlighted in the context of concern around a siloed approach to the climate emergency and the need to broaden the reach of the issue beyond the existing climate emergency networks/forums.

Following the presentation, questions and discussions were held around the following:

- Obstacles to Southwark working in the same way as those authorities highlighted as have good strategies and action plans
- Positives of the Southwark Climate Action Plan
- Encouraging the council to be more ambitious in tackling the climate emergency
- Training for Councillors on the climate emergency
- Engagement with the Southwark society and third sector to make them more aware and involved.

The committee then heard from Councillor Helen Dennis, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development. Councillor Dennis responded to some of the points made in the presentation. Councillor Dennis stressed that the council is ambitious and if that had not translated through to the strategy and action plan, that it could be looked at through the review to ensure that the council's ambitions were brought through accurately and clearly. Councillor Dennis highlighted the work the council was doing around heat networks would be transformational in terms of reducing carbon emissions. Councillor Dennis also highlighted a project worth nearly £7m being delivered across three council estates, the huge potential with the SELCHP expansions. The council would be leading on the delivery of these networks and decarbonisation in that area.

Councillor Dennis explained that what the council wanted to do through the technical analysis which underpins the strategy and action plan which was provided by Anthesis Consultants, was to focus on those actions that could make the most difference in terms of carbon savings. In terms of the council focusing on reducing its emissions, it had already halved its operational emissions within the last four years – this was an area of real progress and delivery on behalf of the council.

Councillor Dennis highlighted that the council also needed to think about consumption emissions, with was hard to measure.

Councillor Dennis set out what the current thinking was in terms of the review. There was commitment to an annual conference and to the publishing of an annual progress report. Next year would be a key year in updating the strategy and action plan due to the citizen jury work which would need to be integrated into the strategy and priority actions, commitments made through the election process that would need to be incorporated into the new borough plan and also integrated into the climate strategy and action plan.

In terms of council spend on climate change/environmental issues, Councillor Dennis highlighted a number of areas where the council had spent or set aside additional expenditure/investment. An estimated £101m was being spent through capital, this didn't include money being spent on housing stock, through the housing revenue account. An additional £25m had been set aside in the capital programme, and in addition to this there was also the carbon offset fund. Significant investments was being made through the housing revenue account to decarbonise the district heating systems at an estimated cost of £350m. There was also investment in standard energy efficiency and retrofitting, which would also be coming from the housing revenue account.

Councillor Dennis also explained that there had been a lack of strategic funding for climate emergency from central government. There was also a lot to digest following COP26.

Councillor Dennis stressed that the work to be undertaken in relation to giving greater clarity about short, medium and long term priorities was a big job for the

team to pull this information together from across the council.

Following further discussion, it was moved by Councillor Gavin Edwards that:

The cabinet member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development be recommended to:

- Revise Southwark's Climate Action Plan to include smart targets throughout, including staged timeline and funding requirements and allocation against each action and policy.
- Carry out a review to ensure the alignment and integration of all council policies with the Climate Action Plan.
- Arrange for training for all councillors on monitoring of the delivery of the Climate Action Plan, to be delivered immediately following the 2022 council elections.
- Return to the overview and scrutiny committee meeting scheduled for 2 March 2022 with a timeline of when the above recommendations will be actioned.

Subsequently, an amendment was moved by Councillor Victor Chamberlain and seconded by Councillor Hamish McCallum that recommendations (bullet point 1 and 2) be completed before the pre-election period.

The amendment was put to the vote and declared to be lost. In accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 1.9(3) Councillor Hamish McCallum requested that his vote in favour of the amendment be recorded in the minutes.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:

1. That the cabinet member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development be recommended to:
 - Revise Southwark's Climate Action Plan to include smart targets throughout, including staged timeline and funding requirements and allocation against each action and policy.
 - Carry out a review to ensure the alignment and integration of all council policies with the Climate Action Plan.
 - Arrange for training for all councillors on monitoring of the delivery of the Climate Action Plan, to be delivered immediately following the 2022 council elections.

- Return to the overview and scrutiny committee meeting scheduled for 2 March 2022 with a timeline of when the above recommendations will be actioned.

9. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF REGENERATION - DRAFT REPORT FOR SUBMISSION TO CABINET

This item was deferred.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as at 1 December 2021 be noted.

The meeting ended at 10.50pm

CHAIR:

DATED: