



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

MINUTES of the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 15 January 2014 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
- OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Barrie Hargrove
Councillor Mark Williams
- ALSO PRESENT:** Gary McFarland (Mears) and Mr Leicester (Mears)
- OFFICER SUPPORT:** Shelley Burke – Head of Overview and Scrutiny
David Lewis - Head of Maintenance and Compliance
John Daley - Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager
Christian Mahoney (Southwark Building Services)
Fitzroy Williams – Scrutiny Team

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr John Nosworthy and Mr Michael Orey.

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

- 2.1 There were no additional items of business that the chair deemed

as urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the sub-committee held on 21 October 2013 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW - COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE - TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING

5.1 The chair welcomed the cabinet member for Transport, Environment and Recycling, Councillor Barrie Hargrove to the meeting and asked the member to highlight events over the past year before taking questions from the sub-committee.

5.2 The cabinet member highlighted the following areas:

- SELCHP facility – providing cleaner energy to 5 estates – reducing bills for tenants
- Improving road safety training
- BMX track
- Secured £3.4 million for Herne Hill Flood alleviation scheme
- 17 Green flags for Southwark Parks
- Saved £1.5 million as a result of parking tendering process

In the last quarter:

- Recycling increased from under 31% to 35%
- Street cleaning standards maintained
- Litter reduced by 7%
- Dog fouling reduced by 8%

5.3 A member asked where was the reduction in dog fouling? The cabinet member reported that inspections were undertaken 3 times a year throughout the borough and a reduction had been recorded - this information could be passed on to members.

5.4 The cabinet member further informed the sub-committee that a great deal of work had done to encourage irresponsible dog owners to pick up their pets' mess.

5.5 In response to a member's question regarding cycling

improvements, the cabinet member reported that a number of initiatives were under way. The council is presently working with Transport for London (TfL) to produce cycling grids and cycling super highways through the city, and bringing in a network of roads through central London straight through to the northern part of the borough.

- 5.6 £250k had been raised for the Safer Cycle Routes to school in Dulwich and a programme is being rolled out to sites in Peckham and Bermondsey, as well as a cycle training course for adults and children.
- 5.7 The sub-committee were informed that 9 Trixi mirrors were placed on junctions and another 5 would be ready to roll out elsewhere in the borough, all with the aim of making roads safer in Southwark.
- 5.8 The chair asked about the statistics of cycling fatalities in the borough - were they on the increase? The cabinet member reported that over the longer term there had been an increase in cyclists being killed or seriously injured, and this followed a trend across much of London.
- 5.9 A member of the sub-committee asked if it was compulsory to have lights on a bike. The cabinet member stated as far as he is aware it is illegal to ride a bike on the roads after sunset with no rear lights.
- 5.10 A member stated that pedestrians seemed to be forgotten in all the plans, crossing the road seemed to take a long time especially at New Kent Road. There was talk of getting rid of the subways at the Elephant and Castle - surely pedestrians need to be considered in all plan for the future? The cabinet member reported that officers were in discussion with TfL regarding the regeneration of Camberwell to improve quality for pedestrians and agreed that a complete pedestrian phase was required. He further reported that Boris Johnson was so concerned with smoothing traffic that it had almost become dangerous for pedestrians cross via traffic lights.
- 5.11 A member asked what had happened regarding school travel plans. The cabinet member reported that two officers had now been recruited to post to increase the number of schools with up to date travel plans.
- 5.12 It was also reported that reducing traffic around schools had reduced pollution in that area. The sub-committee were informed that the clean air for schools scheme had been in operation for a year and 6 schools had been involved and funding had been secured for a further year.
- 5.13 A member asked if there were to be cuts to lollipop people outside

schools? The cabinet member reported there were no planned cuts to the service, but stressed that the service was operating under a very tight budget, so savings are always being looked at, as was the case with the school crossing patrol reduction.

- 5.14 A member asked about the SELCHP cleaner energy to homes scheme. The cabinet member reported that 2,600 homes would benefit from this scheme with cleaner cheaper energy and assured members that there would be discussions with Veolia to roll out this scheme to more estates in the borough.
- 5.15 A member asked how recycling across the borough was progressing between owner occupiers and estates? The cabinet member reported that houses' recycling rate was presently at 54%.
- 5.16 Officers are attending Tenant Management Organisation meetings to offer advice and visits to homes that are not recycling. The estate rates are more difficult to improve, door step monitoring was still being undertaken along with the education programme of letters and leaflets. Targets have not been set for this area specifically
- 5.17 There has also been a pilot scheme regarding food waste recycling on estates but there were problems with contamination. Food waste had been included with recycling which therefore ends up as landfill.
- 5.18 The chair stated that this sub-committee would look into estate recycling as a future item for scrutiny.
- 5.19 A member asked how fly tipping was being addressed in the borough? The cabinet member reported that we collected 2nd highest in the country, but reported tipping from the public had been greatly reduced. 97% of reported tipping was cleared within 24 hours. The Head of Sustainable Services added that the number of calls for this request has fallen in recent time.
- 5.20 A member of the sub-committee asked what is being done to catch these fly tippers? The cabinet member explained that it takes a long time to put together a case and it is costly. However the council has issued 55 fixed penalties since April 2013. Officers also reported that they were currently prosecuting 3 cases as these individuals were persistent offenders in the borough.
- 5.21 A member asked are a majority of parking tickets issued to people parking here to get into London or local residents? The cabinet member reported that 80% of the tickets issued were to people who came from outside the borough with 20% issued to people with Southwark addresses.

- 5.22 A member asked about an audit of environmental performance within council buildings? The cabinet member reported that since July 2010 recycling in 160 Tooley Street and across the council had increased from 3% to 53%. Carbon emissions have been reduced by 20.6% over the last 3 years. The figures are produced annually for central government as part of the carbon reduction commitment.
- 5.23 A member asked if there were any further targets? The cabinet member reported that there were interim targets up to 2025, and the carbon reduction target for 2050 was 80%.
- 5.24 The chair thanked councillor Hargrove for attending this evening's meeting and answering members' questions.

6. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

- 6.1 The chair welcomed Councillor Mark Williams and John Daley (Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager) to this evening's meeting. It was also noted that the Southwark Private Sector Standard was included in the papers for tonight's meeting.
- 6.2 Councillor Williams stated the purpose of the of the private rental standard was to improve standards for tenants and landlords. Letters had been sent out to landlords and tenants explaining what was expected from both parties. Articles were published in the spring and circulated to all concerned as well as information on the website for tenants, landlords and letting agencies.
- 6.3 Members were also informed that newsletters had been despatched to 50,000 people along with twitter feeds, adverts placed in the Southwark news and adverts at bus tops.
- 6.4 Councillor Williams informed members that the accreditation project in respect of the private rented standard had been consulted on last year highlighting management and maintenance and guidance that had been provided to landlords and tenants. The document outlined what was expected from each party.
- 6.5 The report regarding temporary accommodation was agreed at cabinet in December 2013 and was now active.
- 6.6 The structure of the standard was split into two parts, the first being how the property will be managed before and after the occupation as well as what services will be provided to the resident. The second describes the standard of condition, maintenance and repair of the property during the letting.

- 6.7 The chair asked how many people were placed in temporary accommodation by the council that would need to meet the standard? The officer stated that it would take roughly 6 months to get through the list of 600 private lettings that the council presently use and it is a matter of getting our own house in order first.
- 6.8 The chair asked if the scheme could be applied to a specific part of the borough and would someone be able to avoid it by arguing that it would not apply in other parts of the borough? The officer reported that officers would need to apply the scheme to parts of the borough at first rather than the whole borough. There would be problems such as staffing the work which would need to be undertaken. It would need to start with 3 or 4 of wards at first and increase over time to other parts of the borough.
- 6.9 The officer went on to explain that recruitment and staff training had started, and the health and safety training for staff will be completed by July 2014.
- 6.10 Officers were working closely with the contractors in developing the appropriate software package.
- 6.11 A member of the sub-committee asked what the upfront cost would be expected to be? The officer reported that the finance was still being worked on, but it was estimated to be approximately £80,000.
- 6.12 A member of the sub-committee asked if the report covered keeping properties safe from vermin and infestation? The officer pointed out this aspect was covered on page 28 paragraph 2.
- 6.13 The officer reported that consultation on the Southwark Standard was now completed and what is expected of private landlords is clearly known. Everyone who provides this service were included in the review from letting agents to students. Members were informed that what Southwark has asked for is essentially much what was expected nationally.
- 6.14 The chair asked whether as a landlord the council falls short of the scheme? The officer explained that the council had the Warm, Dry Safe initiative and a number of other schemes which proves that we are trying to drive up standards. Members were also informed that the call centre was now back in house and provided a much improved service.
- 6.15 Councillor Hickson requested that officers report back with further information regarding infestation with regards to private rented sector.
- 6.16 The chair thanked Councillor Williams and John Daley for

attending tonight's meeting.

7. HOUSING REPAIRS - UPDATE

- 7.1 The chair introduced the item of business and stated that the sub-committee were interested in reviewing housing repairs, the new working arrangements and to inquire how the statistical information was collected. The chair welcomed the opportunity to speak directly to representatives of both Mears and SBS (Southwark Building Services).
- 7.2 The chair suggested a short introduction from each contractor followed by members' questions.
- 7.3 The sub-committee were addressed by David Lewis (Head of Maintenance and Compliance), Christian Mahoney (SBS), Gary McFarland (Mears) and Mr Leicester (Mears).
- 7.4 The SBS representative reported that there had been a steady improvement, but that there was some way to go before achieving the high standards expected by the council. There were several areas which needed improvement - roofing was highlighted as an example due to the specialist requirement.
- 7.5 Members were informed that staff management was under control and that operatives were being held to account for work undertaken. The representative reported that follow up to jobs were now done quickly after the job was completed.
- 7.6 The Mears representative stated that they were experiencing steady improvement, but there was still space for improvement. The company was working well with the council. Mears were also working well with SBS and were providing healthy competition for each other.
- 7.7 The representative pointed out that the company were very focused and ready to provide a good local experience and produce excellent service delivery.
- 7.8 The chair asked the contractors if they trusted their key performance indicators? The representatives stated yes they did and the performance indicators were transparent. The information was gathered through the customer experience captured by the council.
- 7.9 Members were also informed that the test of customer satisfaction was demanding and the contractor had increased the number of

call backs to tenants who had had repairs.

- 7.10 The chair asked if appointments made are kept? The representatives stated yes, they believed they were kept.
- 7.11 The chair said that in the past Morrison's and SBS repair operatives were observed sitting in their vans completing work sheets for work completed, when in fact the work had not be done, was that possible now? The representatives stated this could not happen now, as when work is completed there is a call back to check client satisfaction. Members were also informed that the level of missed appointments was now very low and this was reflected by the low level of payout for missed appointments, records show that 97% of appointments made were now kept.
- 7.12 The chair continued, does that mean if a job is not completed there is no call back? The representative explained that every job will get a call back at some point. The sub-committee were also informed that if follow up work was required a card would be left with a contact number and a clear instructions on what would happen next.
- 7.13 A member stated that there were stories about incidents, where a repair was reported and the operative said that someone would come back, but no one ever did respond - are some cases falling aside? The representative reported that he would not say that had never happened, but assured members that the company were working towards 100% completion. A scheduling system check list was in place so that no one could be missed.
- 7.14 The Head of Maintenance and Compliance reported that there was now an 80% satisfaction response to repairs undertaken of jobs being completed 1st time, but that still left 20% which was still a large figure which needs to be brought down. The bar is set very high and there is a lot of work ahead to make a marked improvement on the figure.
- 7.15 A member of the sub-committee reported that members hear of the worse cases where appointments are not met and that they were not convinced by the figures contained in the graphs. The representative assured members that there had been a marked improvement in service across the board, and there was a growing confidence in the workforce.
- 7.16 The chair reported that he had collected 10 cases which had been received by members of the council and he would wish to review these with officers and the contractors, all parties involved were in agreement to this taking place. The contractors were willing to look at the addresses for these jobs to see what the problems were with these repairs.

- 7.17 The chair stated that contract managers need to see the cases that members of the council have to deal with on a regular basis.
- 7.18 A member reported that a case of repair had gone on for more than a year, operatives keep calling and the client was not happy with the outcome. The representative stated that if a job was not completed it would be picked up by the contractor to be resolved. The sub-committee was informed that calls are made whether a job is completed or not as a means of monitoring repairs. When a operative reports a job completed this is backed up by call to the customer to check satisfaction.
- 7.19 A member stated that councillors hear of the worse cases and reported that there were a lot of complaints. It was reported that a majority of repairs were completed on the 1st visit, how long did it take to complete the remaining work? The representative reported that 91% of repairs were completed within the timescale, which was 20 working days for non-urgent and 3 working day for urgent works.
- 7.20 A member of the sub-committee stated that there were issues regarding workmen appearing on site, not being respectful and leaving a mess after they had finished working, are the operatives monitored? The representative reported that they were monitored and the contractor needs to be informed of any incidents so that the appropriate action can be taken.
- 7.21 The sub-committee were informed by the contractor that toolbox training is given to all operatives covering aspects such as customer services and health and safety.
- 7.22 A member asked, if some parts of the repair job are done and another part needs to be completed by someone else, what happens? The representative replied this should not happen - the job should be resolved in one appointment by the operative.
- 7.23 Councillor Nelson expressed concern over leaks in blocks of flats (plumbing), she explained there is usually more than one leak causing the problem but workmen would only repair the specific example, which meant that a workman would have to return to the job every six weeks. Councillor Nelson undertook to pass this information to the chair to raise to the contractor.
- 7.24 The representative responded to a question from a member of the sub-committee regarding the arbitration unit. It was reported that officers did work with and have regular communication with the arbitration unit to resolve problems.
- 7.25 The Chair stated that members understand that there is a lot of

good work going on, but there are some nightmares also and these need to be addressed, sooner rather than later.

- 7.26 The vice-chair asked the representative of Mears how the internal restructuring was progressing? Members were informed that the process started in November 2013 and will be completed by February 2014. This is due to the new demands on Mears to revamp the service and to make it fit for purpose for at least the next five years.
- 7.27 The sub-committee were informed that restructuring of senior management is presently being undertaken to provide better overall support to operatives. There were a number of transfers from Morrison's when the contract was taken over by Mears, and a level playing field is required to motivate all operatives to do their best.
- 7.28 Members were informed that the contractor wished to provide a high quality service where operatives provided good customer service, showed ID passes and cleaned up after work was completed.
- 7.29 The representative reported that there had been a increased level of sickness with some operatives and briefly outlined that the bonus scheme that had been in operation appeared to be out of date and benefitted only some operatives and not others. He went on to explain that whoever had taken over the contract would needed to address these points for the future. A number of Morrison's workers have now left the company.
- 7.30 The Chair thanked the representatives of Mears and SBS and Head of Maintenance and Compliance for attending the meeting and informed them that the information provided at the meeting would be included in the chair's report.

8. COMMUNITY WARDENS

- 8.1 The Chair reported that he and the vice-chair had spent a day on patrol with Community Wardens and found it to be a very positive experience. He was preparing a report containing recommendations for the sub-committee to consider in the near future.
- 8.2 The Chair reported that the community wardens were dealing with extremely hard issues which they faced on a day to day basis, whereas previously wardens may have been thought of only as dealing with minor issues such as dog fouling and litter.

- 8.3 The wardens main focus was in the town centre areas such as Elephant & Castle, Peckham and Camberwell where they faced issues with people suffering from alcohol or drug dependency which were a daily issue, as well as homeless people who had to be moved along and directed to services which may be of use to them.
- 8.4 The sub-committee were informed that if members were informed of a problem within their ward, they should share this information with the community warden unit.
- 8.5 The chair also reported that whilst he was accompanying the wardens they stopped a robbery and apprehended the offenders.
- 8.6 The vice-chair told the sub-committee about his time with the community wardens and reported that it had been quite a distressing experience but very informative. It had given him a personal insight into the service they provided.
- 8.7 He further stated that they played an important and effective role and have earned a great deal of respect within the community and added that he would be supplying recommendations to the report for the sub-committee.
- 8.8 A member of the sub-committee stated that although the wardens did not work in all areas of the borough, they did a fantastic job wherever they were placed.

The chair stated that the excellent work done by the community wardens needed to be better communicated within the council, and a draft report will be provided to the next meeting of the sub-committee.

The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.