



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the meeting of the OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on MONDAY APRIL 20 2009 at 6.00 P.M. at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Fiona Colley (Chair)
Councillor Jane Salmon (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Toby Eckersley, John Friary, Barrie Hargrove,
David Hubber, Adedokun Lasaki, Veronica Ward and
Lorraine Zuleta

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Kim Humphreys – Deputy Leader and
Executive Member, Housing
Councillor Adele Morris – Executive Member, Citizenship,
Equalities & Communities
Councillor Paul Noblet – Executive Member,
Regeneration

OFFICER SUPPORT: Jon Abbott – Elephant & Castle Project Director
Stephanie Fleck – Legal Services
Jules O'Mahoney - Head of Social Inclusion
Anne Lippitt – Strategic Director, Regeneration &
Neighbourhoods
Julie Seymour – Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Peter Roberts – Scrutiny Project Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor John Friary.

NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMED URGENT

The Chair accepted supplemental agenda 1 and 2 as late and urgent.

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Toby Eckersley declared a prejudicial interest in item 5 as he had been a member of the Planning Committee which had taken a decision in respect of the Downtown application.

Councillors Jane Salmon and Lorraine Zuleta declared personal and prejudicial interests in item 6 as friends of the Bankside Residents Forum support worker.

Councillor Fiona Colley and David Hubber declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in respect of Executive Member question 10 on Canada Water.

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the open section of the meeting held on March 9 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

1. THREE TOWN HALLS/RESIDUAL ESTATE – UPDATE (see pages 1 - 10)

1.1 The committee noted the update report.

2. ELEPHANT & CASTLE REGENERATION – UPDATE (see pages 11 - 14)

LendLease

2.1 The committee asked how confident executive members were that a new agreement with LendLease would be signed by July 1. Councillor Noblet explained that LendLease had provided the council with revised figures and that these were being worked through. Councillor Humphreys stressed that both the council and LendLease were committed to the transaction and the deadline to agree revised heads of terms. In response to questions, the Elephant & Castle project director confirmed that information awaited from Transport for London had also been received and was being included in the council's considerations.

2.2 Some members of the committee were concerned that, particularly in view of the changing economic climate, a new agreement should not be signed if the cost to the council and council tax payers would be too great. The executive members gave assurances that the best consideration for the council was being born in mind. The executive members confirmed their offer to attend a meeting of the committee in June to outline, in closed session, the impact of the current financial situation and the detail of any proposed contract with LendLease.

Transport for London

2.3 In response to questions, the project director confirmed the estimated figure of £240M relating to works to the northern line station and highway network (paragraph 6 of the report). Members of the committee pointed out that this did not include enhancement of the overground station or opening of the viaduct arches to pedestrian movement. Councillor Noblet added that negotiation was ongoing in respect of the 65% contingency and that detailed figures could be provided to the committee's June meeting. Councillor Humphreys stressed that improvements to the transport infrastructure needed to be affordable.

2.4 The executive members clarified the history of and current proposals for the northern and southern roundabouts and t-junctions. The council had no redress in respect of time lost while TfL agreed the road lay-out as the borough was not financially worse off as a result of the delay. In terms of responsibility for costs, the project director stated that it was incumbent on TfL to demonstrate how the development would impact on transport, over and above requirements already existing and irrespective of the development.

2.5 Councillor Noblet indicated that further detail could be provided to the committee in June.

Heygate Decant

- 2.6 Councillor Humphreys reported that approximately forty-seven leaseholders remained on the estate. In February 188 secure tenants in phase 1 had moved or identified housing, 153 in phase 2 had moved or identified housing and 132 in phase 3 had moved or identified housing. 72% of tenants had moved to council properties and 27% to registered social landlords. Some cases in phase 1 necessitated court action and others had specific medical needs. A number of blocks were already empty and it was hoped to begin demolition later in the year. Members asked for further detail to be brought to their meeting in June.
- 2.7 In response to questions, Councillor Humphreys explained that direct housing offers were being made to all tenants but that they could continue to bid through Southwark Homesearch until that point. The Allocations Team determined which properties were offered direct and which were included in Homesearch. A number of residents had moved to property within the Bermondsey Spa development.
- 2.8 Councillor Humphries updated the committee on the Camberwell Road site on which work should be starting in June. Members asked for information on Nursery Road Park. Councillor Noblet reported that he had given an undertaking at Walworth Community Council. The task was to get the right balance between retaining open space and providing affordable housing. The council was working to minimise the impact on the park while taking into account the architectural work done to date and the nature of the contracts already in place. Councillor Noblet hoped to be able to provide an update to the committee in June.
- 2.9 Members asked how many new and affordable homes would be built in the core Elephant & Castle site in comparison to the number of homes that existed on the Heygate. Councillor Noblet confirmed that all of the 1100 homes on the Heygate would be re-provided (page 17 of the update report gave details). Members stressed the importance of mixed communities and asked for a breakdown of the housing tenure mix on sites. The Elephant & Castle project director agreed to provide this to a future meeting. Councillor Humphreys drew attention to the problems of different tenures within tower blocks, for example difficulties in allocating service charges. He also commented that the balance of tenures had changed in response to the present economic climate with a shift towards more social housing.
- 2.10 Members raised that very few tenants from the Heygate would be moving to the early housing sites and asked whether it would be possible to review the use of these sites to ensure flexibility of tenure and value. Councillor Humphreys responded that the council would not leave sites empty for long periods of time, especially in view of the housing problem in the borough. Councillor Noblet stressed that taxpayers' money and land was at stake and that this had to be born in mind in deciding what use to make of these sites.

RESOLVED: That a further update report be brought to the committee's meeting in June.

3. EXECUTIVE MEMBER INTERVIEWS (see pages 55 - 64)

(Written answers to the questions had been circulated in advance of the meeting.)

To Councillor Kim Humphreys, Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Housing:

- 3.1 *What percentage of the council's tenanted housing stock will meet the government's decent homes standard by 2010?*
- 3.2 Members asked when Southwark would meet the decent homes standard. Councillor Humphreys explained that the results of the stock condition survey were being analysed as the basis for making investment decisions, after which it would be clearer when the target could be met. The survey would remedy the shortcomings of the previous survey. Councillor Humphreys commented that remaining within the decent homes standard was not popular with residents and that implementing decent homes plus would take longer. He offered to update the committee in June on individual estates and asked for details of any cases where members had particular concerns.
- 3.3 Members of the committee were disappointed that not all estates had investment plans yet. Councillor Humphreys indicated that there was insufficient finance available from central government, partly reflecting the inflation in building costs and resulting in considerable slippage early in the programme. In response to questions, Councillor Humphreys explained that decent homes was now a national target, rather than a government requirement, giving authorities less tight timescales with which to comply. He stressed that problems in financing were due to the high level of building costs inflation and not the decision to aim for decent homes plus. In response to further questions, Councillor Humphreys explained that the delivery strategy was in preparation and would be subject to consultation in May.
- 3.4 *Does the Executive Member for Housing feel that the tenants and leaseholders of Registered Social Landlords are sufficiently well provided with amenity space in recent and current residential developments?*
- 3.5 In addition to his written response, Councillor Humphreys explained that the council was looking at possibilities of increasing amenity and storage space and how to make better use of dead space.
- 3.6 *Does the Executive Member believe that tenant satisfaction levels with repairs and maintenance will improve in the next two years?*
- 3.7 Some members of the committee still received complaints from tenants about missed appointments. Members commented that a rate of 2% missed appointments on a total number of three hundred thousand appointments resulted in six thousand missed appointments. Members were also of the view that, from complaints received, it appeared that appointments could be missed a number of times in respect of a single repair or that there could be a re-incidence of the problem. Councillor Humphrey acknowledged that re-incidence could be a particular problem with heating repairs and that this was being looked into and investment made in the heating contract. He also reported that the tenants' survey had shown an increase in overall satisfaction from 57% to 62%.

- 3.8 *Does the Executive Member anticipate that there will be the same heating and hot water breakdowns this winter as there have been in the last two winters?*
- 3.9 Councillor Humphreys reported on increased investment this year and that estates where there had been problems in the past had been targeted. New heating contracts and management were in place and had been successfully integrated into the call centre.
- 3.10 *Has the latest restructuring of Housing Management been a success?*
- 3.11 Councillor Humphreys stated that restructuring was ongoing and included the areas of residents involvement and estates property management. He believed that the restructuring had led to improvements in investment delivery and strengthened the performance management structure supporting the housing management service.
- 3.12 Members asked for clarification of housing officer walkabouts around estates and asked who was able to action any problems identified by the officer. Councillor Humphreys explained that housing officers could report repairs and follow these up with management if they were not addressed.
- 3.13 Members raised the continuing issue of unauthorised occupancy. Councillor Humphreys reported that from last month the new programme of tenancy checks was being rolled out across the borough.
- 3.14 *When will a decision be taken on the future of the Hawkstone Estate?*
- 3.15 Members asked for further clarification on the future of the estate. Councillor Humphreys confirmed that consultation would start in June. Two blocks had already had work done in line with the decent homes standard. The future of the remaining blocks, including low rise blocks in poor condition and very expensive to re-furbish, would be decided once the consultation was complete.

To Councillor Paul Noblet, Executive Member, Regeneration:

- 3.16 *What progress is the Executive Member making as chair of the Cross River Partnership to revive the plans for the Cross River Tram?*
- 3.17 Councillor Noblet clarified that TfL had confirmed the preferred route and depot site and that the council was seeking clarification through the planning documents as to whether TfL wanted these safeguarded. The council could continue to press for firm information but no business case or funding had been agreed to date. Councillor Noblet was happy to provide an update at a later date.
- 3.18 *What is Southwark Council doing to support the campaign for a new station at Surrey Canal Road?*
- 3.19 Councillor Noblet confirmed that he had written to the Mayor of London and the chair of Millwall Football Club, in support of this issue and broader regeneration of the area, and offered to meet with them. He would also be contacting his counterpart in Lewisham Council. Members of the committee stressed the importance of putting together coherent proposals across the two boroughs.

- 3.20 *Has the Executive Member taken forward Cllr Barber's suggestion of a legal challenge to the Thameslink project in order to save the South London Line?*
- 3.21 Councillor Noblet confirmed that a legal challenge was not possible as too much time had passed since the original decision had been made. Members of the committee asked if he was aware of issues in terms of platforms not being extended sufficiently at London Bridge station. Councillor Noblet indicated that he was happy to look into this.
- 3.22 *Would the Executive member for Regeneration please give the committee an update on the regeneration of Canada Water, including the latest position in relation to the multi-modal transport study and possible locations for a leisure centre? Is he satisfied with the progress of the Canada Water regeneration programme? Is the project on track to deliver all the community benefits promised in the original brief?*
- 3.23 Members asked when would work start in the library and what was happening in respect of the leisure centre. Councillor Noblet explained that the contract for the library had been signed two weeks ago and that there was a period of four weeks in which to close footpaths and exits. Some delay had resulted from difficulties in locating drains related to the tube station. Hopefully work would commence in the last week of May with the build lasting around eighty weeks. Members highlighted the increasing budget needed for the library. Councillor Noblet indicated that a fixed price contract had been signed. The increase in cost in part reflected building inflation and that changing some of the materials used had to some extent addressed this. He stressed the difficulties of the site and that the library would offer a good facility for a large number of people.
- 3.24 Councillor Noblet stated that the leisure centre was the core of the leisure offering and that consultation was ongoing with all residents on the two options of refurbishment or new build. Members asked if the increased budget of the library impacted on delivery of the leisure centre and were disappointed that the proposal had not been agreed yet. Councillor Noblet explained that the preferred option would go to the planning committee and then to the executive to be sent out for consultation in July.
- 3.25 *Is the Executive Member for Regeneration satisfied with the proportion of family housing included in recent planning applications for residential development? If not, does he believe that there is anything that the Council can do to improve the situation?*
- 3.26 Councillor Noblet acknowledged the need for more larger family accommodation and stressed that the council was looking at whether the proportion of 3+ bedroom units in a development should be increased to 25% and whether this should be reflected in the Core Strategy. He also wondered whether particular community councils had a greater need for such accommodation.
- 3.27 *Is the Executive Member satisfied with the progress of the Nunhead & East Peckham Renewal Area project?*

- 3.28 In Councillor Noblet's view the renewal area had fallen between different parts of the council and was now back on target. There was a need to re-double the council's efforts and perhaps to extend the area north of Queen's Road. Members of the committee responded that it was not the residents' view that work was on target and suggested that the executive member meet with local people and ask questions about progress and the needs of the area. Councillor Noblet commented that the budget was smaller than that for the Bellenden renewal area and that it would be beneficial to attract private funding. The project needed to be reassessed to determine if it was developing in the way that had been intended.
- 3.29 Members of the committee stressed that different areas of the borough required different approaches in terms of regeneration. Areas such as Camberwell were in need of well thought out town centre management. Councillor Noblet agreed that Camberwell was a priority area.
- 3.30 *Please could the Executive Member provide an update on the Aylesbury Estate regeneration project including an analysis of the risks to the project?*
- 3.31 Councillor Noblet reported that work had started on the south west corner of the estate. He hoped that a report would be submitted to the executive or the major projects board in June. The council was working on two possible strands of funding, a private finance initiative and a submission to the homes and communities agency, and Councillor Noblet stated that he would update the committee on these in due course.
- 3.32 Members hoped that lessons had been learned from the Heygate decant process. Councillor Noblet stated that the case management team would be working on the Aylesbury and that council officers would be available on the estate. The council had improved its processes to bring voids back into stock more quickly and had a better understanding of the communications that tenants needed. In response to further questions he explained that the phasing across the Heygate and the Aylesbury needed to be carefully managed and that this would be influenced by the choice of developer. Councillor Noblet commented that the number of tenants and leaseholders was greater on the Aylesbury, making the decant process much longer and that a lot of work was being done to early with leaseholders and make money available for early leaseholder buy-outs.

4. THE CORE STRATEGY, THE HOUSING STRATEGY 2009 TO 2016 AND THE SYNERGIES BETWEEN THEM (see pages 19 - 54)

- 4.1 The officers from regeneration and neighbourhoods introduced the report and explained the structure and purpose of the Core Strategy.
- 4.2 In response to questions, officers explained that West Camberwell was identified as having some potential for development but with no agreed implementation plan. Members raised the question of conditions required of places of worship. Officers explained that meetings had taken place with various groups to discuss issues around noise and transport. At the moment there were no proposals for special conditions for places of worship other than in respect of community facilities. Councillor Noblet added that enforcement and development control was being looked at and that the council was working with faith groups to ensure that properties had the correct planning usage.

- 4.3 Members highlighted that residents in Peckham were being consulted on the density of new homes and asked whether the result of consultation might impact on targets. Officers indicated that it was likely that a lower density would still achieve the targets. Members also drew attention to the proposal that 35% of private housing be affordable and asked how it would be ensured that this was not solely bought by first time buyers who were liable to move on. Officers stressed that this was an increase from 25% and that the aim was to provide more family housing and with a wider mix of tenures.
- 4.4 Members were concerned that the housing estimate was not realistic in the context of the general infrastructure. Officers indicated that there was competition for all the sites in the borough and that in May a study would be completed of the density of housing possible on each of the sites and that this might lead to a revision of the targets. The council would set out all sites within the borough and prescribe the amount of development possible on each of them.
- 4.5 Members queried the target figure of 6,000 dwellings specified in relation to the Elephant & Castle and the purpose of the schedule of 400 sites over 0.25 hectares. Officers stated that the target derived from the London Plan and that the schedule set out the amount and type of development allowed on each site.
- 4.6 Members acknowledged the intent to calculate the financial implications of regeneration schemes (page 82 of the agenda) and asked whether the assumptions on which these calculations were being made could be made clear. Officers responded that a housing viability study was being carried out the results of which would be reported to members. Members stressed that a range of possibilities need to be taken into account.
- 4.7 Members emphasised the high level of social housing in South Bermondsey. Officers explained that the affordable housing policy only applied if a development was 10+ units (smaller units did not require any element of social housing). Members asked how rigidly the split between social and intermediate housing was implemented across the borough. Officers responded that there could be more than the minimum of affordable and also socially rented housing and that negotiations took place in respect of each individual scheme.
- 4.8 In response to further questions, officers clarified the requirements in terms of 3, 4 and 5 bed units, room sizes and gardens. Members of the committee underlined the need for properties that were wheelchair accessible. Officers indicated that the provision of such homes was often in competition with larger family homes but commented that it was possible to include units on upper floors as long as a minimum of two lifts were available. Officers also explained that the GLA was carrying out an assessment for London in respect of provision for gypsies and travellers and that this would inform the number of pitches in the borough.

5. UPDATE – JUDICIAL REVIEW OF DOWNTOWN (see pages 65 - 71)

- 5.1 The legal services representative updated the committee on the position in respect of the possible judicial review and explained that it would not be possible for a scrutiny review to take place at the present time.
- 5.2 The committee noted this and agreed to consider the possibility of including some aspects of the review within next year's scrutiny work programme.

6. CALL-IN: REQUEST FOR CONTINUATION OF GRANT AID FUNDING TO BANKSIDE RESIDENTS FORUM (see pages 72 - 80)

- 6.1 The executive member, citizenship, equalities & communities, explained the context of the historical and current funding position with Bankside Residents Forum. The forum had been set up in response to developments in the Bankside area with a specific remit around planning and regeneration. The executive member had asked officers to look at the funding process for next year and the possibility of the forum applying through one of the council's mainstream funding streams.
- 6.2 The executive member commented that the Active Citizens Hub had commissioned a mapping of resident groups in the borough which would allow an overview of forums and help inform future funding. Members were concerned that this take account of the views of community councils and provide sufficient detail to help inform next year's funding decisions.
- 6.3 Members were of the view that other wards could benefit from similar funding, including Section 106 funding, and from support in terms of planning and licensing issues. The executive member emphasised that Bankside was unique in terms of regeneration with one quarter of all planning applications in one year affecting Cathedrals Ward. She was open to discussing needs with other residents groups and to look at other forums with officers.
- 6.4 Members considered that the rationale for the continued funding was not adequately outlined in the original report. The executive member explained that the report had come late in the day and that a decision was needed urgently as it affected the support worker's salary. She assured the committee that the same would not happen next year.
- 6.5 Members asked whether Bankside Residents Forum was subject to the same requirements as other grant applicants. The head of social inclusion explained that the forum reported to the council on a quarterly basis and met with officers regularly. Equivalent monitoring standards and processes applied to the forum as applied to other grant recipients.
- 6.6 Members highlighted the work of the Willowbrook Centre and expressed the view that the council could review the assistance it provided to the centre.
- 6.7 The committee noted that the Bankside Residents Forum provided rough guides to planning procedure and asked whether these could be made available to all councillors on request. The committee also noted the possibility that discussions with a developer in respect of Section 106 might result in ongoing funding for the forum. Officers stressed that losing the grant element of the funding might lessen the reporting mechanisms with the council and that residents valued this link. It might be preferable that responsibility for the funding be spread and a mixture of sources be found.

RESOLVED: 1. That the decision not be referred back to the decision maker and accordingly the decision be implemented immediately.

2. That the final paragraph of the submission to the committee be welcomed, stating that, as part of the government's "Taking Part" pathfinder programme, Southwark's Active Citizens Hub has commissioned a consultant to map all resident groups of all types in Southwark and this information will be available in June 2009. The submission stated that this mapping will allow the council to take an overview of all residents' forums across the council and will help inform future funding.
3. That it be noted that next year's process will move the funding in question to part of the mainstream funding programme, giving other forums the opportunity to apply for funding.
4. That consideration be given to more support being provided to the Willowbrook Centre.

The meeting concluded at 10:45 p.m.