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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 9 JANUARY 2019

(7.15 pm - 10.25 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Laxmi Attawar (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Stan Anderson,
Councillor Ben Butler, Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor Russell Makin, Councillor Nick McLean,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Tobin Byers and
Councillor Martin Whelton

Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee
(Director of Environment and Regeneration), Steve Langley
(Head of Housing Needs and Strategy), James McGinlay
(Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities) and Ben
Stephens (Head of Parking Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies received

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4 CLARION REGENERATION (Agenda Item 4)

At the invitation of the Chair, Cypren Edmunds, Chair of the High Path Resident's Association, gave his thoughts on the regeneration project. Cypren discussed Shelter's 'vision for social housing report' and its relevance to this discussion. He explained that despite the positive attributes of social housing, it is looked down upon by many. He told the Panel that although he had previously articulated concerns about Clarion, previously known as Circle, to senior management they had not been listened to and as such the resident's confidence level is low.

Dave Treanor, local resident, stated he felt that Clarion had committed to a minimal level of affordable housing and far more families could be housed if non-profit rental was made a priority. He urged Clarion and the Council to split the units as half not for profit rental / half for sale.

Nigel Benbow, Councillor for Abbey Ward, spoke on behalf of his residents who had felt previous meetings with Clarion had been very one-sided without any acknowledgement of the residents' unhappiness. Despite asking residents to come forward to talk at this meeting, sadly most have given up, thinking whatever they say, will be ignored. He added that he supports the regeneration but does not want to see current residents and maintenance work being ignored.

Paul Quinn, Director of Merton Regeneration for Clarion Housing, was asked by the Chair to respond to the speakers concerns.

In response to the comments from Mr Treanor, Paul outlined the Section 106 agreement with an arrangement that any surplus money will get reinvested back into Merton.

In response to Cllr Benbow's point around people not being listened to, Paul disputed that as based on the extensive consultation so far, Clarion's feeling is that the great majority of people on the three estates welcome the regeneration plans.

In response to Mr Edmunds, Paul agreed that the Shelter report is very interesting and Clarion are keen to build as much affordable housing as possible.

The Chair thanked the speakers for coming and Paul Quinn for his comments.

Paul Quinn provided an update report on the Clarion Regeneration. He outlined the progress made thus far and the next steps in terms of planning application dates.

Clarion are continuing to run an extensive programme of community engagement.

Clarion recognise there are significant levels of overcrowding in all three sites and all residents, whether homeowner or tenant, will be rehoused in a home of appropriate size.

The Chair asked the panel for any questions of clarification. In response to panel member's questions, Paul Quinn clarified the following;

- A panel member asked how Clarion will manage communication with the wider area that is affected by the works. Paul Quinn responded that Clarion acknowledge the need for ongoing communication and to find new ways of engaging. We have been good at formal consultation of forums and letters, but now plan to extend our use of digital consultations.
- Merton CIL have carried out independent research on how the needs of disabled people can best be met. The intention is to have a bespoke response to each individual we rehome.

- There are currently no plans for regeneration of Laburnum Court.
- With regards to health facilities, GP surgeries and roads - there is a formal trigger in the planning applications and if required we take direction from the health providers on what they need. There are no plans for new roads, and whilst Clarion don't take a position on naming, we are in favour of those that live there being a part of that decision. The Director of Corporate Services pointed out that there is a street naming policy which must be adhered to.
- All Compulsory Purchase Orders are covered by national legislation which Clarion follow.
- With regards to the Large Estates Allocation Fund. Jane Bolton, Head of Housing Services for Clarion, explained that The LEAF fund has not been fully spent in recent years due mainly due to a lack of suitable proposals coming through that meet the criteria for funding (i.e. an environmental improvement or a project that will benefit the wider community), or a lack of support when suggestions are put to residents to vote on. The process needs to be revitalised and our Resident Involvement Team will be active this year.
- Regular discussions have been held with Transport for London about the impact of the Sutton Link extension on the regeneration in order to accommodate the plans.
- The worst overcrowding is in Eastfields with around 36%, High Path is similar but slightly lower and Ravensbury has just under 20% overcrowding.

Councillor Natasha Irons, Ravensbury Ward, asked if there is a contractor on board and what is their history, how many compulsory purchase orders will be needed and what would be done to minimise disruption and how Clarion intend to mitigate the mistrust and negative feelings from residents. Paul Quinn replied that United Living are the main contractor and are very well known. There will be very few CPO's required. We want to engage residents and this will be done by having good relationships with the contractors, keeping residents in the loop and ensuring the first phase of homes are really good so residents will see they are high quality and want to move in to them.

RESOLVED

Clarion Housing were thanked for their report and agreed to return in twelve months with an update on the regeneration.

5 PUBLIC HEALTH AND AIR QUALITY - A REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES
2 (Agenda Item 5)

At the invitation of the Chair, the Panel heard representations from Sustainable Merton, LOVE Wimbledon and a local resident.

Diana Sterck from Sustainable Merton explained they fully support the measures set out in the Air Quality action plan but urged the council to use positive communication and other proactive campaigns to encourage changes in driver behaviour instead of pursuing higher parking charges. She asked what action is being taken by the Council on buses as high polluters and fleet vehicles.

Sara Sharp, local resident said that she thought the proposals discriminated against residents in Wimbledon and doubted that the proposals would have an impact on pollution, she thought drivers would seek avoidance measures such as paving over gardens and asked whether there was any evidence that increasing charges would reduce pollution in the borough.

Helen Clark Bell from LOVE Wimbledon said it was regrettable that the business community had not been involved in the development of the strategy so far, questioned the impact that the proposals would have on the level of traffic and whether these proposals would affect trade in the town centre. She quoted that 60% of traffic in Wimbledon is through traffic, and recently Putney changed their buses to Hybrid models and air pollution was reduced by 93%. She requested that the policy of charging for parking after 6pm be reviewed. She also expressed dissatisfaction at the quality of town centre parking, it is not well lit and substandard services are not well maintained.

In response to the speakers, the Director of Environment and Regeneration wished to emphasize that the desired impact of this proposal is improving air quality. Traffic management is one of the methods we have to do it. A lot of work has gone into making the charges proportionate and reasonable and they will be reviewed. The Council will aim to encourage people not to idle in their cars, and do plan to clean up the passenger transport fleet by reducing vehicles where possible and switching to cleaner electric vehicles, we recognise that car parks need to be invested in also and confirmed the business community will have an opportunity to comment during the consultation period.

In response to panel member's questions, the Director of Environment and Regeneration clarified the following;

- The Council are planning three policy changes including the diesel levy, parking charge increase and emissions based scheme. Although we don't currently have an I.T system that can support the emissions based policy at present, we are in the process of procuring one. The Director of Public Health also added there is evidence to support that behaviour change is most effective when done with a multi tool approach.
- All parts of the borough are different but overall Wimbledon has the better access to public transport.
- We are in the process of completing our Local Implementation Plan, looking at the transport in Mitcham, the Sutton Link consultation, bus networks and investing more in cycling infrastructure.
- Although the report states the top polluted roads are in Mitcham and Morden, the Council are seeking to improve air quality across the whole borough.
- He agreed there is a need for further investment in cycling infrastructure.
- Merton will go beyond the statutory duty of twenty one days for a consultation. They have chosen to extend it to twenty eight days and will invite residents to comment also.

A panel member proposed the Panel debate a recommendation to refer the policy to full Council as the Panel considers it to be outside the budget and/or policy framework given there is no evidence presented that the scheme will lead to lower levels of car ownership and reduced vehicle movements.

As highlighted by para 2.2.30 of the report, policy on parking charges cannot solely be a revenue-raising strategy, and yet without the presentation of any evidence-base or analysis, can it really be claimed that when setting the charges, there has been a clear focus on issues such as traffic management and the sustainability objectives? There are also no means or benchmarks to measure the success.

The Chair referred the matter to the Head of Democracy Services who advised that after consultation with the Monitoring Officer, they were both in agreement that the proposal falls within the Budget and Policy Framework. In terms of the Budget Framework, The report sets out that the Council cannot take into account the financial consequence of its powers to make traffic parking orders. It is an irrelevant

consideration which must be ignored (see principle g) in article 13). It would be unlawful to take the financial implications into account and the decision cannot therefor be a budget decision, and cannot be outside the budget framework. It is not outside the Council's policy framework as the proposal falls with the Cabinet's Air Quality strategy and does not run counter to any of the policies approved by full council.

The motion to refer the matter to Council on the basis that the proposal falls outside the Budget and Policy Framework was seconded by Councillor Daniel Holden and formally moved to a vote. Three voted in favour, four against. Motion fell

Councillor Daniel Holden raised a motion that recommended to Cabinet that targeting one half of the borough and not the other is deeply unfair on the residents of Wimbledon and Raynes Park and that until such time that the public transport links, and by association air quality, are improved in Mitcham, the parking tax proposals be rejected. This was seconded by Councillor Nick Mclean and moved to a vote. Three voted in favour, four against. Motion fell.

Councillor Daniel Holden raised a motion that refers back to the Cabinet that a different solution is needed to help bridge the health gap between the East and West of the borough which the current proposal does not achieve was seconded by Councillor Nick Mclean and moved to a vote. Two votes in favour, five against, one abstention. Motion fell.

RESOLVED

Panel resolved (five votes for, two against and one abstention) to make the following reference to Cabinet:

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel welcomes this opportunity to comment on the report and to raise issues for consideration by Cabinet. The Panel recognises the need to improve public health and air quality in the borough and welcomes this attempt to use the parking charges strategy as one of the levers to address these important issues. The Panel has previously taken an active role in scrutinising air quality issues and has examined the link between air quality, vehicle emissions and traffic speed through pre-decision scrutiny and two call-ins relating to the diesel levy. Cabinet is asked to note that the Panel plans to monitor the implementation of the diesel levy to assess whether the policy is beginning to have an impact on desired outcomes. The Panel also plan to take an active role in contributing to the terms of reference for a review of the levy in 2019/20.

The Panel request that Cabinet should receive additional evidence to demonstrate that increasing parking charges results in a decrease in traffic, and on the link between higher costs for high polluting cars and changing the behaviour of drivers.

The Panel welcomes Cabinet's plan for public consultation on these proposals and recommends that Cabinet share the results with the Panel so that it can contribute additional thoughts prior to a final decision being made by Cabinet.

The Panel also welcomes the review planned 6-12 months after implementation of the new charges (paragraph 2.3.26 of the report) and recommends that the Panel also has an opportunity to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of the findings.

6 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2019-2023 (Agenda Item 6)

A panel member asked how saving ENV1819-02 (Parking Services) is low risk and low impact. The Director of Environment and Regeneration replied that an old system is currently used and procurement is about to take place of a newer system that will produce virtual parking permits and be more reliable and efficient.

A panel member asked if the reduction of two time staff is viable given the previous discussions around the Air Quality work. The Director of Environment and Regeneration responded that these will be back office staff, not parking enforcement.

A panel member asked for an elaboration on the assumptions made for the figures in ENV1819-03 (Parking Services). The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained it is an estimate and likely to be different in reality. We applied an increase to the volume of transactions and deflated by at least 20% to reflect the change in behaviour.

Councillor Daniel Holden requested, given the previous agenda item, to formally move that this increase in tax be scrapped and Cabinet find an alternative solution. This was seconded by Councillor Nick Mclean. Two vote in favour, five against and one abstention. Motion fell.

A panel member enquired about the reduction in pay and display machines meters. Director of Environment and Regeneration replied that with over 50% of transactions completed via Ringo and the panned further shift towards digital payments, taking out the redundant machines will have no impact.

A panel member asked the Head of Housing Needs, what changed so that CH57 saving could be replaced? The Head of Housing Needs explained that alternative

savings were found via housing related support/floating support. With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and an increase in Houses of Multiple Occupation, the original saving was unachievable without impacting the discharge of these functions.

A panel member commented that the alternative savings of CH35/36 seemed a large amount. The Head of Housing Needs replied that it is one they are confident they can achieve without an impact to vulnerable service users.

The Panel agreed to extend the meeting until 22:30.

The Director of Corporate Services drew the Panels attention to the Service Plans.

A panel member asked about SLWP 2022/23. The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained this recognises the life cycle of wheelie bins.

A panel member asked why so much will be spent on Mitcham when it has already been regenerated. The Assistant Director of Sustainable Communities explained the amount is a provisional allocation for future works.

A panel member requested to know what happened to reducing the fleet vehicles by 10% and using the money saved on capital spend on trees. Director of Environment and Regeneration explained it was considered by Cabinet but not accepted. Cabinet recognised the benefits of this proposal but felt it would generate additional maintenance costs.

A panel member queried why Christmas parking is not mentioned in the savings. The Director of Corporate Services clarified that it doesn't have a specific budget. The Director of Environment and Regeneration is still waiting for the analysis to be concluded but could bring it to a future meeting.

RESOLVED

Panel to receive Christmas Parking analysis at future meeting.

7 BUSINESS PLAN 2019-23: SAVINGS PROPOSALS INFORMATION PACK
(Agenda Item 7)

See item 6

8 COMMERCIALISATION TASK GROUP - ACTION PLAN REVIEW (Agenda
Item 8)

A panel member asked whether, given the boroughs history with creative arts and film, film rights will be part of the consideration. Director of Environment and Regeneration replied that Communications have a new film right contract.

The Assistant Director of Sustainable Communities gave an annual update report as requested by panel members. Good progress has been made. We are looking at commercialisation opportunities and events through the Greenspaces team, we continue to pursue investment in the Morden area.

A panel member suggested developing a strategy or plan to maximise the brand recognition of Wimbledon to improve tourism/occupancy of hotels. It was discussed that there will be a London Borough of Culture item at April's meeting.

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

A panel member requested that two potential items be added to the work programme – Parks and Keep Britain Tidy. The Director of Environment and Regeneration confirmed he was aware of the Wandle Park pilot of removing bins but has not yet seen the impact or the final report.

A panel member asked whether the panel could have an update on the children's playgrounds review. The Director of Environment and Regeneration said there is no review planned, but when undertaken the findings can be brought to panel members.

The Chair recommended that 'Keep Britain Tidy' item could come to March's meeting. Director of Environment and Regeneration agreed.