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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 18 MARCH 2015

(19.15 – 20:45)

PRESENT

Councillor Russell Makin (in the Chair),
Councillor Stan Anderson, Councillor David Dean,
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Abigail Jones, Councillor
Imran Uddin , Councillor John Sargeant, Councillor Janice
Howard, Councillor Tobin Byers, Councillor David Chung,
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Abdul Latif, Councillor
Susanne Grocott, Councillor Judy Saunders, Councillor
Najeeb Latif.

ALSO PRESENT: Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), James
McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities), Paul Walshe
(Parking Services Manager), John Hill (Head of Public
Protection), Mario Lecordier (Traffic and Highways Services
Manager), Steve Shaw (Service Delivery Manager), Rebecca
Redman (Scrutiny Officer)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2015

Panel agreed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Panel agreed to consider Item 6 first and re-order the agenda to the following:

Item 6 – Call In – Tariff changes to the on street pay and display parking machines

Item 5 - Street Lighting – Report for Information

Item 7 - Performance Reporting

Item 8 – Topic Suggestions 2015/16

Item 9 – Housing Supply Task Group – Verbal Update

5. CALL IN – TARIFF CHANGES TO THE ON STREET PAY AND DISPLAY PARKING MACHINES

Panel considered the call in of the delegated officer decision taken on the tariff changes to on street pay and display parking machines on 18 February 2015.

The cost to implement these changes would be £40,000 and take 6-8 weeks to implement. Susanne Grocott outlined the reasons for the call in. These were:

- Higher costs for residents;
- Alternatives presented but not given any evidence to support this choice and the final tariffs determined;
- The financial implications of updating all machines over 3 years;
- Lack of consideration of impact on residents;
- 20 minutes free parking should be borough wide; and
- Increments are not clear.

Councillor Najeeb Latif who spoke on behalf of Wimbledon Village Business Association discussed his concerns regarding the decision taken on parking tariffs and the impact on local, smaller businesses. In particular, how new charges might impact on footfall in smaller shops in Wimbledon Village. He added that local businesses rely on having a fair parking system and tariff to enable shoppers to come to the area. The WVBA would like an extension to the hours of parking allowed, a clearer and standard parking tariff borough wide and cashless parking payment systems to be implemented sooner.

Councillor Judy Saunders explained that cashless parking systems had been introduced in certain car parks and would be rolled out further in the year ahead. Furthermore, 20 minutes of free parking would be rolled out further in future. The new tariff is linear and therefore an improved system as customers simply pay for the time they park. There has been no significant increase in parking charges since 2011 and the agreed income that will be generated under this new structure has been agreed by full council.

Chris Lee added that this decision was taken further to the town centre parking survey and the outcomes. The issues that emerged from the scrutiny review of parking have been addressed through this new structure. However a reduction in parking charges was not recommended or agreed. The decision taken aims to increase parking charges, in line with the decision of Council ,whilst simplifying a complex tariff structure. The new tariffs are fair and reasonable charges for parking. Lower charges do not necessarily mean that it is better for businesses. 20 minutes free parking is usually sufficient as it helps to increase turnover, which in turn helps businesses.

Chris Lee explained that across the range of pay and display sites, each with a different turnover, the council generates less income per annum over the next 3 years than the 10% increase that was agreed. The council have also been working with WVBA to increase parking and the number of bays available. The new tariff can also be implemented alongside the cashless parking charges this year.

Councillor David Dean asked when the decision had been taken to raise prices. Chris Lee confirmed that this was a full council decision taken as part of budget setting on 5th March 2014.

Councillor John Sargeant queried the additional pricing within the report that was not available when the Panel had undertaken pre decision scrutiny of the town centre parking survey outcomes and action plan.

Councillor Abigail Jones asked how the tariff compared with the cost of parking in town centre car parks. Paul Walshe explained that town centre car parks are cheaper than Wimbledon town centre on street charges.

Councillor Abdul Latif asked how a decision was taken that 20 minutes free parking was sufficient. Councillor Judy Saunders explained that the decision was agreed at scrutiny and by all political groups.

Councillor David Dean stated that the Panel needed some assurance that 20 minutes free parking is implemented across the borough.

Chris Lee explained that he doesn't have the authority to roll out 20 minutes of free parking across the whole borough, only at agreed neighbourhood shopping parades.

Councillor John Sargeant added that the Panel needed to have sight of the proposals to roll out 20 minutes of free parking ahead of the decision being taken.

RESOLVED: Panel agreed that the decision should go ahead and be implemented as agreed.

6. STREET LIGHTING

Steve Shew introduced the report explaining that the council's street lighting contract expired in September 2016 and sought the Panels view on procurement of this contract. Councillor Russell Makin asked what street lighting reductions had been agreed. Steve Shaw explained that there would be some reductions but that this would be done so in a safe fashion to reduce the risk of crime and accidents.

Councillor Russell Makin asked what consultation had taken place with the police and CCTV on this. Steve Shew explained that the reductions won't affect CCTV. The reduction in lighting would not make any difference. Councillor Stan Anderson asked in which areas this would apply. Steve Shew explained that this would be borough wide.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked when all lights that are not energy efficient would be replaced. Steve Shew explained that the council do not intend to bring in certain types of lighting and that some are already energy efficient. All lights could take 14 years to replace to LED lights and the council would need

to undertake retrofitting. The council are looking to increase the capital to convert existing steel columns and replace just the lanterns. This is more cost efficient.

Councillor Imran Uddin asked if solar panel lighting had been considered. Steve Shew explained that a joint procurement process with other boroughs has been investigated to determine if there were options for shared services with other councils to achieve greater savings. He added that some of the lights are solar powered but not entirely efficient. This may become an option in the future.

Steve Shew explained that the council could look to jointly procure the contract with Sutton and are looking at options and could possibly tender together. This would need to go through the political process. The existing contracts of respective boroughs also end at different times. Outside consultants will be engaged on this to look at how costs might be shared.

Steve Shew explained that the figures listed in the report do not reflect maintenance and that savings could be realised once work has been done on energy efficiency. ML – 4000 columns could be converted to LED but at a cost of £2 million which would therefore require significant capital investment. The cost of retrofit would be £400,000 and payback on this would be expected over 2-3 years. The £2 million investment would see a return over a longer payback period of 15 years. There would be savings in both maintenance costs and in energy costs.

James McGinlay explained that these figures are based on projections and the budget line would be adjusted in subsequent years.

Councillor David Dean questioned how much dimming lights would save. Steve Shaw explained that dimming lights [adaptive lighting] makes quite a significant saving. Adaptive lighting operates at various times of the night.

James McGinlay explained that this decision would be taken through the scrutiny process in due course.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and agreed to receive the street lighting contract when available for pre decision scrutiny.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Chris Lee explained that the Panel had received the latest performance report at their last meeting in February 2015 and that there was no new updated performance data to share with the Panel at this time.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the update.

8. TOPIC SUGGESTIONS

The Panel considered any topics that they wished to put forward for consideration for their 2015/16 work programme. Councillor David Dean proposed that the Panel consider parks and maintenance and that they keep an overview of the performance of Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP). He also suggested that the Panel consider solar energy and how council stock could be made more energy efficient. Councillor Abdul Latif proposed that the Panel look at what the council could do to manage the accommodation of traveller communities. Councillor John Sargeant suggested that the Panel consider green spaces, the delivery of adult education and building control and asked that the Panel receive more detailed information earlier in the change process. Councillor Russell Makin suggested that the Panel receive a report on the council's property portfolio.

RESOLVED: Panel noted that the work programme would be set at its first meeting in June 2015.

9. HOUSING SUPPLY SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor Ross Garrod provided an update to the Panel on progress with the Housing Supply Scrutiny Task Group. He explained that the task group have met with a range of stakeholders to date, including Housing Associations across London. Councillor Ross Garrod explained that the review had been extended to allow for the election period and for further evidence to be gathered and site visits to be held with the GLA, NHS and other Local Authorities that are exemplars of good practice. The task group will produce its final report for the Panels consideration at its September 2015 meeting.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the update.

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