

## Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 23 January 2018 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

- Present:** Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Chair);  
Councillor Jan Buttinger (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Pat Clouder, Joy Prince and Donald Speakman
- Also Present:** Councillor Alison Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning  
Councillor Paul Scott, Deputy Cabinet Member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning
- Apologies:** None

### PART A

#### 1/18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2017 were agreed subject to minute number 42/17 being amended to read:

Following the Cabinet meeting on 22 November 2018 there were two amendments proposed to the recommendations from the meeting of 7 November 2017. The first one was related to ensuring residents received notifications following reporting of flytips which can be found in the conclusions to the item.

Leaflets on the bulky waste collections be clarified to include an additional line regarding the cost of white goods collection and *the number of items that can be collected*.

#### 2/18 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

#### 3/18 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

## **Cabinet Member Question Time - Cabinet Member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning**

Councillor Alison Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Regeneration, provided a presentation to the Sub-Committee outlining the work that had been undertaken within her portfolio.

The Sub-Committee was advised that some of the highlights included the following:

- Brick by Brick programme, development work was now underway
- The redevelopment of the Whitgift Centre, which has received sign off by the Mayor of London
- Completion of Phase 1 of the Growth Zone
- The Draft Local Plan has been determined as 'sound' by the Government appointed inspector
- Successful Gateway programme on Universal Credit

Members were also informed of areas that presented continuous challenges, such as:

- Provision of affordable homes, managing the housing crisis
- Meeting the targets set by the Mayor of provision of housing which has doubled
- The Delivery of Westfield within the set time frame
- Recruitment and Retention of staff to deliver services
- Concerns from residents on growth
- The aftermath of Grenfell, duty to ensure works carried out in blocks.

The Sub-Committee was further advised that the Council had been proactive in addressing these challenges. There had been extensive work carried out to ensure that all fire risks were up to date, programme of visits and works had been carried out with residents kept up to date on progress. Safety measures were also being looked into, such as the upgrading of alarm systems.

The Council had been working to determine its response to the requirements of the Draft London Plan whilst working to meet the housing demand.

There was also planned maintenance work and major renovations taking place on Council stock.

There had been improvements in engagement with private landlords as part of the Landlord licensing scheme and there had been a rise in the number of landlords registered with the scheme.

The Sub-Committee learned of the preventative work undertaken by the Gateway Service to prevent homelessness, which had helped many households and resulted in savings to the Council, with long term leases taken on properties to be used as temporary accommodation.

Members questioned the work around the provision of sprinkler systems in tall buildings and the safety of cladding, and enquired as to who would pay for

any works. The Sub-Committee was informed that the Council had decided to meet the full cost of works in Council owned buildings in order for the work to commence without delay. None of the Council's buildings had been identified as requiring cladding replacement.

In the private sector, the government had implied that the responsibility was to fall on the residents, The Cabinet Member had written to the government minister to dispute costs being passed onto residents.

The Sub-Committee was further informed that all Council blocks had been certified by the Fire Brigade as safe and issued fire safety certificates.

In response to Members' request for an update pertaining to 'choice based lettings', officers advised that this had only been implemented in the last 9 months and although it was still in the early stages, the number of people using the service had been higher than expected. The service was open and transparent, which provided users with a realistic view of availability of homes in the borough. People on the waiting list were now able to make a more informed decision on either waiting for a council home to become available which would likely take a number of years or to address their needs through the private housing sector.

Members praised the Gateway service on the innovative homeless prevention work that had been completed since the department was set up in 2015.

The Sub-Committee learned of the Council's commitment and work with partners to eradicate rough sleeping by 2020, by working to address the many issues that affected rough sleepers that was not limited to just their housing need.

Croydon welcomed the opening of CRISIS office in Croydon and Councillors had met with the office to learn of the work that they were doing and what further work was required to meet the campaign objectives.

In response to Members' queries on how the Council would address the targets set by the Mayor of London's draft London Plan, officers advised that they were still considering a response and were interested in how the GLA came up with the targets set. Those draft targets set a significant challenge for Croydon as well as other boroughs and the Council would investigate if they set a fair expectation. Croydon had worked hard to deliver its housing targets over a number of years by encouraging developers into the borough.

Officers responded to questions regarding density in the North of the borough and the impact that building of blocks of flats would have on local amenities, in particular office conversion to flats that had been granted under the government's permitted development scheme. As permitted developments, such schemes were not subject to normal levies and the Council had made representations on this issue.

The Sub-Committee questioned what was being done to ensure that the quality and maintenance of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) were of acceptable standard. Members were informed that this was an area that was consistently being addressed. There were excellent HMO's in the borough but there were also those that were poorly managed. There had however been a lot of work done to address issues through the landlord licensing scheme. As a result of the work on the draft local plan, the Council had been examining levels of saturation and identifying areas to prohibit conversions to HMO.

In response to Members' queries regarding the status of the redevelopment of the Whitgift Centre, officers stated that the Council, Government Minister for London and all officers involved were doing all the necessary work to advance the project. Council officers had been in regular contact with the CLP who were engaging well to ensure that the consent required for various aspects of the project were being sought. The council remained confident on the development. An internal board had been set up, all directors in the Place Department were involved and working to ensure that the town centre remained open and people were attracted and encouraged to visit Croydon during the period of redevelopment work.

In response to Members' questions regarding the progress of the Fairfield Halls redevelopment, officers advised that the proposed completion of major building work was still on track for November 2018. The works were now in the intrusive phase of the complicated programme and had come across various difficulties such as asbestos. Officers had been in talks regarding phased opening of the building with the new operator, BH Live. The Sub-Committee requested clarity be provided as to when the building would be fitted out by BH Live.

Following the draft Local Plan Inspector's comments, Members queried the policy on tall buildings, the robustness of the criteria on local green spaces and the implication of proposed changes to public houses protection.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the inspector was right on his comments for a place specific policy in Purley. In regards to local green spaces, this was a new designation that can be included in plan making and the planning framework to ensure that they are afforded the same level of protection as greenbelt areas.

Quantitative and qualitative considerations should be given to local green spaces. There had been work carried out with Public Health on the concentration of hot food takeaways in certain areas and the implications on health and wellbeing of residents. The inspector had aligned more in favour with the Council's restriction on concentrations of these establishments in some areas. Officers stated that it was important that the community function of public houses was noted.

The Chair thanked Councillor Butler for the presentation and Councillor Scott and Officers for their contributions.

## Evolution of the Suburbs Supplementary Planning Document

The Head of Spatial Planning introduced the item to the Sub-Committee by advising that the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is being produced as guidance to steer the policies and designations that facilitate sustainable growth as set in the emerging Croydon Local Plan 2018.

This report and presentation had been brought to Scrutiny as part of the development and process of producing the draft Supplementary Planning Document to ensure that discussions take place to examine, discuss and dissect the guidance.

The Sub-Committee was advised that there was increased pressure for Croydon to meet the demands of London's growth and deliver at least 1677 homes per annum to 2036. This document would act as a guide and steer how sustainable growth of the suburbs can be achieved.

The document would provide guidance and certainty to communities, officers, applicants and their agents to steer proposals for developments to enable sites to achieve their potential as part of a holistic long term vision for Croydon.

The SPD would focus on three key guidance areas:

- (i) Residential Extensions;
- (ii) Re-Development – of existing sites, to increase density and provide a quality benchmark; and
- (iii) Focussed Intensification – Guidance on evolving character and increased density as a result of development.

The Sub-Committee was further advised that this was borough wide guidance and there was a need to differentiate areas of the borough in the plans. Croydon was a green borough and as a result the guidance would also be relevant in conservation areas, however Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans will take precedence.

It was proposed that the draft Supplementary Planning Document would be ready for formal consultation by July 2018, with adoption of the document anticipated in October 2018.

In response to Members' comments that the document was not yet ready for public consultation, officers responded that this was one of the reasons why it had been presented to Scrutiny.

The aim of the presentation was to prompt question and discussion, and there were still a number of detailed matters and considerations to be addressed.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the consultation documents would include text and the language used would be universal. The plan would also

include a section on policy and be clear on elements that were driven by planning legislation and development plan policy.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Regeneration commented that the document would act as a guidance to deciding the types of developments that would be suitable for specific areas in the overarching context that space must be sought for thousands of new homes and that this must be knitted into suburban areas.

Members commented that the guidance should be clear on issues of subjectivity due to the expected longevity of the document and that the proposal flags up the potential for permitted development rules not to apply on some proposals. Officers responded that the guidance would be nuanced and subjective depending on proposal, location of sites and housing types.

In response to Members' questions on whether the SPD would reflect policy on landscape of a site, officers advised that the intention was for the SPD to provide an explanation of best practice of what can be achieved on landscape and how to balance the use of space. Officers further advised that any conditions relating to landscape would be added to planning consents and tightly enforced.

There would be proposed discussions with Transport for London (TFL) to provide sustainable transport and create bus routes in areas where they do not currently exist or not frequent.

The Sub-Committee was informed that Croydon was leading the way and was ahead of other Local Authorities in the development of the SPD and it would appear that the Mayor of London's draft London Plan had taken on board learning from Croydon's draft Local Plan.

The Sub-Committee learned that the Croydon Local Plan would be reviewed every five years and that the Council had been working with partners such as the Health, Education and Utilities sectors to identify future needs and support anticipated growth in each Ward.

Members commented that the direction of travel of the SPD was very clear and that it would be more detailed than previous SPD. There were concerns that it could be overly prescriptive and the expectation of sites to deliver more could be viewed negatively by some.

Officers responded that the document would assist with instances where planning applications were received which showed a deliberate avoidance to provide affordable housing through underdevelopment of any particular site. The document would also provide guidance by acting as a point of reference on maximisation of plots.

The Sub-Committee commented that Councillors should have been provided this plan earlier to enable input prior to the collation of the document and that the proposed consultation period of July and August should be revised to enable high resident consultation.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Homes Planning and Regeneration responded that the reporting of the proposals to the meeting was to open a discussion with Councillors and that strong engagement with stakeholders and residents was welcomed. Officers also stated that they would discuss further the timings of the proposed public consultation.

In reaching its recommendations, the Sub-Committee reached the following **CONCLUSIONS**:

1. That the challenge was to make the guidance clear and accessible to all users;
2. That the presentation achieved its aim of prompting questions and discussion on matters to be considered in the Supplementary Planning Document;
3. That the Council needed to communicate effectively to users the background of this document, and the importance of the use of this guidance in future developments; and
4. That the transport policy would have an impact on the Local Plan and should be developed in line with the SPD.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Cabinet that:

1. The proposal be clear on what is meant by the term 'optimising use of plots';
2. Consultation be held with housing associations in the borough to promote working with local developers;
3. The Small Builders Forum be consulted and invited to comment;
4. The proposed consultation period be considered to enable further resident participation;
5. The Council should explore a wide range of methods to engage with residents on the Supplementary Planning Document;
6. Any conditions placed on the development of landscape be tightly enforced; and
7. The document to highlight areas of subjectivity in design policies.

## **6/18 Brick by Brick Business Plan**

The Managing Director of Brick by Brick presented the draft annual business plan to the Sub-Committee and stated that the content of the document was changing rapidly, with some of the information now out of date since it was

published. New information would be updated prior to the presentation of the draft at Cabinet.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the report contained detailed analysis, aims and structure of projected costs beyond a single year. It also included market analysis following Brexit of construction pricing and tendered schemes.

The paper further detailed the revenue that was expected to be accrued, how much would be spent, expected levels of borrowing and the delivery of programmes.

Members queried the risks to the development and delivery programme such as rises in interest rates, fluidity of the housing market and what contingencies were in place to manage the associated risks.

Officers responded that there was a detailed analysis in place due to a property correction expected in the London housing market where it is predicted there would be reduced growth following a period of strong growth in outer London.

Officers acknowledged the element of associated risk with all markets but expected that there would be limited effect on the ability to sell the developments proposed for Croydon. The developments were geared towards first time buyers, with demand still high in this group due to the different schemes available to assist them in purchasing their first property.

There was also an advantage of being a distinct Council development company as there was the scope to release properties into the market that had an associated commercial element.

In response to Member's questions as to what lessons had been learnt in the last year, the officer advised that there would be future extensive work undertaken in the following areas:

- Product design
- Robust delivery of schemes as a result of ambitious delivery programme
- More engagement with local residents
- Collaboration with other Local Authorities and across the UK in terms on learning.

Members queried the level of consultation and communication with local residents. Officers informed the Sub-Committee that there was a new Head of Communications in post who had reviewed the process in place to ensure information was being relayed to local residents and that they were kept aware and up to date with proceedings.

The Sub-Committee was further informed that with regards to all units, there would be a period of exclusivity for local residents to express and reserve units of interest. Members welcomed this proposal and suggested that residents living in proximity to units be given priority to those units.



The Sub-Committee questioned the quality of the materials to be used for the units and asked for assurances that robust, high quality materials would be used for all the proposed units. Members were advised that whilst different materials would be used for different tenures, architects designing schemes had been instructed to ensure that all units had commonality of high specification materials which had gone through a robust consultation process.

Additionally, it would be made clear to companies who submitted tenders that works carried out must be in line with the high specifications set.

In response to Members' questions on how they expected to achieve a balance between a duty to shareholders and a commitment to produce high quality units, officers advised that investment had been made on good design which would result in high quality developments.

Officers responded to queries on how it was decided as to which units would be retained by Brick by Brick and stated that the private rented units would be retained by Brick by Brick whilst the council would retain the affordable units.

The Sub-Committee  
RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet that Residents living in close proximity to a site should have priority access to affordable units either to rent or shared ownership.

**7/18 Work Programme**

The Sub-Committee noted that the remaining meeting of the Sub- Committee in the 2017/18 Municipal Year would focus on the Tram Network and Transport/Rail, specifically progress on policy, sustainability and environmental considerations.

**RESOLVED:** To agree the Scrutiny Work Programme 2017/2018

**8/18 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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