

Community Safety, Environment and Residents Services Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Tuesday 12 April 2016

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Larry Culhane (Chair), Iain Cassidy, Sharon Holder and Charlie Dewhirst

Other Councillors: Wesley Harcourt

Officers: Ainsley Gilbert, David Gawthorpe, Sue Harris, Kathy May, Thajinder Ghai and Anthony Leonard (SERCO)

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Steve Hamilton.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

52. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair invited members of the public present to make any comments in relation to issues on the agenda as part of that item.

53. PLANNING ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

David Gawthorpe, deputy team leader, development plans team, explained that his team was responsible for writing the council's planning policies. At present the council had two adopted planning policies: the core strategy and the development management local plan. All planning authorities were required to publish a monitoring report on the operation of their planning policies at least annually. The monitoring report included key indicators, and covered areas such as sustainability, performance against benchmarks, the adoption of neighbourhood plans and the duty to cooperate with neighbouring planning authorities.

Mr Gawthorpe explained that the council had a target of 1031 new homes per year. The number of homes completed in 2014-15 was 1147, which exceeded the target, and although it was 8 less than 2013-4 it was significantly higher than the 422 homes completed in 2012-13. The number of homes given planning permission in 2014-15 was 4774, which was a significant drop on the 6563 approved in 2013-14, however, this figure was inflated because of the massive nature of the Earl's Court scheme which had been approved in that year.

Only 11 percent of the units approved, and 18 percent of those completed, were classed as affordable, compared to a target of 40 percent. These figures had been reduced by developers making use of viability assessments which allowed them not to provide affordable housing. 68 percent of permitted conversions created flats with two or more bedrooms, which provided the borough with more family sized accommodation.

The employment rate had increased to 77 percent, whilst the number of working age people on out of work benefits had fallen from 2.5 percent to just 1.8 percent.

Environmental indicators were good, with the amount of carbon dioxide generated per capita falling from 5.6 tonnes in 2013-14 to 5.4 tonnes in 2014-15. On site renewable energy generation continued to be included in applications. Usage of private transport, such as cars and motorbikes, had fallen over the year, whilst the proportion of trips made by public transport had increased.

Councillor Dewhirst asked when planning permission had been granted for the homes counted in the figures for 2014-15, as he recognised that some of the schemes had been submitted well before April 2014. David Gawthorpe explained that the date used was the date the decision notice was issued, which might be much later than the Planning and Development Control Committee meeting which gave approval for the development as S.106 agreements were debated before a decision was issued.

A resident asked whether the council knew if the family sized homes being built were being bought and lived in by families. David Gawthorpe said that this was not monitored; he explained that the Mayor of London's definition for

family sized homes was used as the basis for the indicator. He confirmed that HMOs would not be counted as family sized accommodation.

Councillor Harcourt noted the good work the borough was doing to promote cycling and asked whether the shift towards cycling was monitored in the report. David Gawthorpe agreed to look into this.

54. FUTURE WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICES - INVOLVING THE CITIZEN

Sue Harris, director of cleaner, greener and cultural services, explained that a Futures Board had been held recently to discuss waste and street cleaning. This had brought cabinet members, officers and stakeholders together to discuss the issues. This meeting had decided to set up three task and finish groups on communications, performance management and the relationship of the service and contractor with private sector and social landlords. These groups were due to report back to the leader of the council in September 2016.

Kathy May, head of waste and street enforcement, updated the committee on actions taken since the last meeting. Serco had looked into reporting options for frontline staff, but the initial quotes for the technology required had been prohibitive. Further investigations were planned. At Lakeside Road longer patrols were planned to cover the whole day to try to prevent dumping. Stickers had been distributed to residents however these had been withdrawn as they had created negative publicity about the council; there had been limited demand for the stickers so it was not proposed to reprint them. 'A boards' had been successful in reducing dumping, especially when first installed in a location and so it was proposed to purchase more of these and to move them around regularly. Street scene enforcement now had access to CCTV in their offices, but this had proven to be less helpful than had been hoped, as the quality of the images was often not good enough to allow officers to prosecute offenders.

Sue Harris asked whether the committee would support the use of CCTV images on posters in the vicinity of fly-tip sites in order to help identify offenders and deter further dumping. The Chair asked whether officers would be able to prosecute on the basis of a photograph being identified. Kathy May explained that it would depend on what other evidence was available; it was thought however, that seeing the photograph might encourage offenders to admit to their crime when questioned, and deter others. Councillor Dewhurst said that he supported the idea, but that if it proved difficult to use real pictures of offenders, the deterrent effect of a mocked up photo of someone dumping rubbish on a poster might be worthwhile. Councillor Harcourt suggested that the number of fines issued in an area could be added to the poster. Councillor Holder suggested that the pictures could be posted on the council's website to try to identify offenders. A resident agreed that the posters would be a good deterrent.

Councillor Dewhurst said that many of the issues with fly-tipping were caused by the transient nature of some of the borough's population. He suggested

that more education was needed for new residents and asked whether the council ran a service for people who were moving out. Kathy May explained that the service was trying to get waste information included in council tax notices, so that new residents would know how to dispose of waste, and that a cheap bulky waste service was offered, but that this was not well used.

Sue Harris asked whether the committee would be prepared to see fines for littering increased from £80 to £150, and fines for fly tipping increased to £400. The Chair said he felt more substantial fines for fly-tipping seemed appropriate. A resident asked whether on the spot collection of fines and self-funding litter patrols had been considered. Kathy May said that cash collection on site was resisted because of the difficulty of auditing the process, and collection rates for fixed penalty notices issued and collected at a later date was high. Sue Harris explained that the model for self-funding litter patrols had been considered, but that the current council model did not work in that way. The resident suggested that an external contractor be used, but Councillor Harcourt explained that there were concerns about the control of enforcement agents who needed to collect sufficient fines to provide the company with profit. Councillor Harcourt agreed that officers would look into how the scheme was operating in other areas, and if the feedback was positive, officers would consult about the idea. He agreed to provide the resident with a decision on whether such a scheme would be implemented at a future PAC meeting.

A resident asked what the decriminalisation of waste, referred to in paragraph 4.15 of the report, meant in practice. Kathy May explained that the legislation allowing officers to prosecute those who presented their waste other than as was required by the local authority had been made harder to use; government had felt that the notices were too heavy handed but the additional restrictions imposed had rendered them unworkable for most local authorities.

The Chair asked whether the trial whereby large bins were left in accessible locations for residents in Kensington and Chelsea had proven a success. Kathy May said that as the trial had only recently launched it was too early to tell. She explained that the scheme was in addition to normal waste collections, and that residents had been invited to place waste in 1,100L bins, which were being placed in strategic locations around the borough. She said that the key risks from the scheme were the attraction of dumping at the bin locations, siting of the bins, and a reduction in the recycling rate as residents could more easily dispose of residual waste than recyclable waste. The results of the trial would be available to the task and finish groups set up by the futures board.

Councillor Cassidy explained that residents had raised the concentration of HMOs at a recent planning meeting and noted that this was often considered to be a cause of increased fly-tipping. Sue Harris explained that the council had policies on waste storage facilities, but that there was no policy on the concentration of HMOs. Kathy May said that refuse and recycling lorry rounds were reconfigured where a cluster of HMOs generated more waste. Councillor Harcourt felt that waste storage facilities were vital, and that stronger wording ought to be included in the new Local Plan. A resident

suggested that examples of best practice could be included. Anthony Leonard, Contract Manager for SERCO, agreed to ask area managers to take pictures of good designs, although he noted that these were often more expensive.

The Chair noted that on a recent walkabout some waste had been left behind as it was not presented correctly; he asked how residents were reminded of what they ought to be doing with their rubbish. Anthony Leonard explained that residents currently got a card put through their door, however this system was slow and not terribly effective. New hangers for wheeled bins had been introduced, but further review was necessary.

Councillor Cassidy asked whether properties rented out by the night through sites such as 'airbnb' needed a commercial waste contract. Sue Harris said that it depended on the precise circumstances of the property.

A resident explained that he and the Chair had been shown how the 'report it' system worked and had identified that the problem was a lack of action being taken by street scene enforcement officers when they received reports, combined with a lack of proper management oversight. This had led to some thirty abandoned bikes the resident had reported, in some cases as long ago as 2011, remaining on the streets. He had also conducted a test of how the system was currently operating, reporting an abandoned bike in Hammersmith Broadway on 19 January 2016; this had not then been removed for 24 days, at which point Sue Harris had intervened to get it cleared. There was however some good news as the abandoned bicycles outside the town hall had now been removed and the stands were being used regularly. Sue Harris thanked the resident for his work, and agreed that the service had not been good enough. She explained that new procedures were being introduced to allow managers to track whether reports were being dealt with appropriately and officers who failed to meet the standards expected of them would be disciplined.

Sue Harris asked whether the committee felt that 'report it' should give residents the option of whether a rubbish dump was cleared or investigated. The Chair suggested that it would be better if the question asked whether the resident thought that it was likely that there would be evidence of who had dumped the waste. Kathy May said that the question would need to be phrased carefully to avoid members of the public handling or removing evidence. The resident would also need to be informed that the investigation might delay the clearance of the waste. Anthony Leonard explained that in the north of the borough enforcement officers and the SERCO supervisor had co-ordinated enforcement action and clearance so that soon after investigations were complete the waste could be removed. He hoped that this arrangement could be developed elsewhere. Councillor Cassidy asked whether recognition schemes for good work existed. Kathy May said that this was mostly done informally, as performance could be impacted upon by the area in which staff were asked to work.

Councillor Holder suggested that the telephone number for reporting dumped waste be promoted more widely, for example by putting it on recycling sacks.

Sue Harris agreed to look into this issue, and whether it could be put on the side of vehicles.

55. WORK PROGRAMMING

Councillor Dewhirst asked that the work programme for the committee be added to all future agendas. He also asked for an item on Street Markets to be brought to a future meeting.

56. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on 28 June 2016.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.30 pm

Chairman

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