

HOUSING, ECONOMY AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE**29 September 2015 at 7.30 pm**

MEMBERS: Councillor Jayne McCoy (Chair), Councillor Nick Emmerson*
(*Absent) (Vice Chair) and Councillors, David Bartolucci*, Jean Crossby,
Adrian Davey, Trish Fivey, Neil Garratt, Amy Haldane, David
Hicks, Joyce Melican and Daniel Sangster.

Councillor Ruth Dombey (ex-officio)*

14. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Jayne McCoy opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Emmerson and David Bartolucci. Councillor Adrian Davey was present as a substitute.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JUNE 2015

The clerk explained that the audio recording of the meeting of 23 June had failed, so the minutes were more detailed than usual.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2015 are agreed as an accurate record.

18. PLANNING PRE-APPLICATION SERVICE FEES REVIEW

The report was introduced by the Head of Development Management and Strategic Planning. He noted that this is the first review of the charging schedule since charges were introduced in 2011, and is based on cost recovery, but also aims to expedite the application process and improve outcomes. He welcomed comments and questions from Members.

In response to questions, the Head of Development Management and Strategic Planning advised that, of a sample of applications made since 2013, 90% of cases that received pre-application advice resulted in applications being made, and 95% of those resulted in first time approvals. He advised that there are no exemptions for schools, but they are dealt with on a case by case basis. Similarly, discounts for charities are considered on an individual basis. He advised that the changes to the service will be advertised through the usual channels of communication, as well as via the reinstated Agents Forum.

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With regard to monitoring the impact of the changes, the Head of Development Management and Strategic Planning explained that data will be collected monthly on advice culminating in non applications, time taken for the decision and rate of first time approvals. The Strategic Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration confirmed that the impact of the new fee schedule will be reviewed, and will be reported back to this Committee as part of the annual fees and charges review.

RESOLVED that the Housing, Economy and Business Committee:

1. Agrees the proposed revised fee schedule for pre-application charges with immediate effect;
2. Agrees the proposed revised pre-application service delivery schedule with immediate effect.

19. FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY - DELIVERY OF 2014/15 PRIORITIES

The Executive Head of Housing and Regeneration introduced this report, which updates the Committee on the delivery of a number of items in the delivery plan, and outlines the challenges presented due to changes in the national funding picture. He welcomed comments and questions.

In response to questions from Councillor Trish Fivey, the Executive Head of Housing and Regeneration undertook to feedback on the success of the One Planet and Energy road-shows and in particular, the number of people who were assisted.

Councillor Adrian Davey suggested that Councillors be briefed on how residents can seek the best value deals for their energy supply, so that they can advise residents. Councillor David Hicks also noted that many vulnerable people do not take advantage of grants and other beneficial schemes offered by utility companies as they view them with suspicion. The Executive Head of Housing and Regeneration undertook to establish what the utility companies can offer, and consult with the Communications Team on the best way to channel this information to residents.

The Executive Head of Housing and Regeneration confirmed that the funding of measures to address fuel poverty was one of the potential uses of any future profits from the Council's decentralised energy company known as SDEN but that any decisions would be taken in due course by the relevant committee.

In response to the discussions taking place, it was agreed that it would be beneficial for one or two Councillor(s) to be appointed Fuel Poverty Champion(s).

Councillor Jean Crossby raised concerns about the presence of mould in some SHP properties, particularly given the dangers to the very young and old. It was noted that mould is not always caused by actions of tenants, but can also be as a result of the structure of a property. The Executive Head of Housing and Regeneration undertook to brief the Committee outside of the meeting on Sutton Housing Partnership's plans to inform tenants about mould in their properties.

Councillor David Hicks raised concerns about the premium rates charged by utility companies for those using pre-pay meters. His concern was echoed by other

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Members of the Committee who agreed Central Government should be lobbied to deal with this issue.

RESOLVED that the Housing, Economy and Business Committee:

1. Notes progress in delivery of actions set out in the Fuel Poverty Strategy Delivery Plan for 2014/5.
2. Approves the proposed amendments to the Fuel Poverty Strategy Delivery Plan for 2015/16 as summarised in section 5.
3. Will receive a briefing on the Sutton Housing Partnership's plans to inform tenants about mould in their properties.
4. Agrees that a Councillor shall be appointed Fuel Poverty Champion.
5. Agrees that Members should lobby Central Government to take action against the premium rates charged by energy companies to those customers using pre-pay meters.

20. LONDON/SOUTH LONDON DEVOLUTION AND GROWTH PROPOSALS

The Executive Head of Economic Development, Planning and Sustainability delivered a presentation on the South London and London Devolution Growth Proposals. The presentation detailed the composition of the South London Partnership, the opportunities and challenges of devolution, the four key 'Asks' of the Partnership and how they will be developed into proposals, and the implications for LB Sutton.

The Executive Head of Economic Development, Planning and Sustainability emphasised that the five boroughs involved are at the very early stages of the process. The four key proposals for devolution are currently at the scoping stage.

The Executive Head of Economic Development, Planning and Sustainability undertook to report further developments to the Committee as appropriate, but emphasised that proposals for devolution will not impede the good work already taking place in partnership with other boroughs. She also explained that there was no intention to compromise the specific identity of any borough involved in the Partnership.

The Committee thanked the Executive Head of Economic Development, Planning and Sustainability for her detailed and informative presentation.

21. ANY URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR

No urgent items were brought forward.

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22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on 15 December 2015 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

Chair:

Date: