

**Appendix A to Council:
Public Questions
18 January 2016**

**London Borough of Sutton
Council: 18 January 2016
Questions under Standing Order 8.7
From Members of the Public**

1. Question asked by Peter Geiringer, local resident, to Councillor Wendy Mathys, Chair of the Children, Family and Education Committee

You have made a political decision that the council purchase part of the Sutton hospital site without first fully consulting the local residents living within the vicinity of the site. How are you going to prevent the public feeling they have been 'stitched up' when you grant yourselves planning permission for the school?

Reply by Councillor Wendy Mathys, Chair of the Children, Family and Education Committee

Thank you Mr Mayor, good evening Mr Geiringer. Given that there are no other brownfield sites capable of supporting a secondary school in the Borough, the political administration has stated its preferred site is the Belmont hospital site. This does not and will not preclude the opportunity for local residents to make their views known. Indeed the possibility of the site being used for a secondary school has been known for some time and debated at Local Committee.

From February and subject to Committee approval, the Local Authority intends to consult on the issues and options as the first stage of the review of the Borough's Local Plan. The Issues and Options consultation sets out preferred options for different site allocations and proposes the designation of a new school on the hospital site alongside other uses that are being developed as part of the wider framework of the London Cancer Hub.

In addition to this, and as the Local Authority starts to prepare a planning application for the school itself, there will be opportunities for residents to review the plans as they progress and make comment on them both in the pre-planning phase of this project and in the planning application itself. We will communicate more on this programme of consultation in due course.

It is entirely normal and understood in law for a Council to promote a project requiring planning consent and to act as a Local Planning Authority (LPA). There is equally strong requirements for the LPA not to fetter its discretion and to be able to demonstrate that any decisions it takes are purely on planning grounds.

Supplementary Question asked by Peter Geiringer

Thank you very much, nice to be back here again even for a short time. I don't suppose you've missed me but there we go. So when are you going to fully consult the public living around Sutton Hospital with your plans, and will you in this case get another independent local authority to consider granting planning permission or not? As only their decision could be deemed to be fair, rather than Sutton being

judge, jury and executioner on this planning application which could be for a massive building on this small site out of keeping with the surrounding bungalows and two storey houses.

Reply by Councillor Mathys

Thank you Mr Geiringer. Well, I've already explained exactly when we will be consulting. As regards being judge, jury and executioner I'm just surprised you make those comments as a former member of the planning panel yourself. And you know that the committee will apply extremely stringent demands on every aspect of planning before making their final decision.

Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Mary Burstow

Does the chair of children services share my disappointment that a former Belmont councillor does not want to champion a secondary school for Belmont children, in Belmont?

Reply by Councillor Mathys

Thank you Councillor Burstow. Well yes of course, it's very disappointing. It's an exciting time to have a new school in that area where places are much needed. Thank you.

2. Question asked by Peter Geiringer, local resident, to Councillor Wendy Mathys, Chair of the Children, Family and Education Committee/ Councillor Whitehead

Having two secondary schools within a few hundred yards of each other along the Brighton Road will cause massive traffic jams at school opening and closing times in and around the Chiltern Road junction, as well as causing local buses along the Brighton Road to be virtually inaccessible at these times by the ordinary members of the public as they will be filled up with school children. Are you therefore going to commission a fully independent survey of the local traffic consequences of building a school on the hospital site prior to giving yourselves planning permission?

Reply by Councillor Wendy Mathys

This is a key issue of course as part of the planning application. A transport assessment will be commissioned and submitted as part of the planning application. The assessment will identify what measures might be necessary to mitigate traffic and transport implications of this proposal.

Supplementary Question asked by Peter Geiringer

Were this school to get the go ahead, what assurances can you give that the current Victorian road layout surrounding the site will be able to accommodate a

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new school for 1,400 pupils, an expanded institute of Cancer Research, an expanded Royal Marsden hospital, a possible brand new hospital to replace St Helier and Epsom hospital, a possible new health centre and some new residential accommodation? Who will you be commissioning to look into this, how much will it cost and who will be paying for this new road infrastructure?

Reply by Councillor Wendy Mathys

Thank you Mr Mayor. We'll I've already said we'll be having a transport assessment. I understand we've already been in touch with TfL to have some preliminary discussions. I can't tell you who will be asked to do it at this stage, it doesn't fall within my remit. But I don't know whether that's been decided as yet, but I'm sure we can let you know once it's been decided and what the cost will be. Thank you.

Supplementary Question asked by Councillor David Hicks

I just really wanted to follow up on this point of a transport assessment. If you take Councillor Burstow's view, it's local children that will be going there so there shouldn't be any transport issues. The problem is, the demand is not around the school, the demand is elsewhere in the borough. It will have a major impact upon the transport infrastructure, the whole borough. The school will be completed within two or three years. The Cancer Centre, has a hub project will be completed within 20 years. There's a major gap where there's going to be a problem. What issues are going to be resolved quickly?

Reply by Councillor Wendy Mathys

Mr Mayor, I've already explained that we have this master plan which we're all consulting on over the next few months and it will be looking at all these issues. I've already explained also that the relevant committee is working with TfL and I'm not in a position to give you any more information but I can assure you it is high on our priority list.

3. Question asked by Bill Main-Ian, 29 The Warren, Carshalton Beeches, SM5 4EQ to Councillor Jayne McCoy, Chair of the Housing, Economy and Business Committee

In GLA Planning report D&P/2600/01 it states, "The Council has also recently confirmed its commitment towards delivering a district energy network in the area, and in this respect, it has secured a loan to enable the construction of the heat network, initially from the landfill gas engines on the site, to delivery heat to an approved scheme at the Felnex Site in Hackbridge."

Fichtner Consulting Engineers wrote a report in respect of possibilities should Planning Permission be granted for the Incinerator, which obviously has now occurred. In that report 7 phases of development were mentioned for commercial

supply of heat.

In the 2 years 8 months since planning permission has been granted what progress has been made to implement these phases including supply to Carshalton College, Westcroft Leisure Centre, St Helier Hospital and other customers e.g. new housing developments in the planning phase and if nothing has happened, what is the timetable to implement the different phases?

Reply by Councillor Jayne McCoy, Chair of the Housing, Economy and Business Committee

Thank you, thank you Mr Main-Ian. I welcome your shared sense of urgency to bring forward this ground breaking project that's going to establish Sutton as a leader in providing green energy for south London so I'm pleased you've got that same sense of urgency that we have. During the period from the granting of permission for the Energy Recovery facility, the council's undertaken procurement of a design and build, and operation and maintenance contract for the network. That procurement exercise is expected to be completed in summer this year and all going well the decentralised energy network will be operational in 2017.

Regarding the expansion of the scheme beyond Felnax, which has always been the seed base from which to grow the network, the council has undertaken heat mapping of the north east of the borough which includes Westcroft and Carshalton College that you mention, and we've undertaken some route proving, exploring the viability of expanding the network to St Helier hospital. And because there's a lot of potential there, we're engaged in discussions with Epsom and St Helier NHS trust to progress this.

We've also been having discussions with both existing and potential house builders about connecting to the network both within and outside of the borough and we have been engaged in marketing the decentralised energy network in Sutton to developers both as a means of attracting development and of seeking opportunities to expand it and the feedback so far has been extremely positive.

Supplementary Question asked by Bill Main-Ian

Thank you councillor. I take it from that answer that there has been no customers actually signed up as yet. I think after the life centre debacle about the financials over that project I think local residents would like to know what the hook up costs in phase two and three are likely to be, whether they're going to be the same as the Felnax costs or more or less. Could you answer that please?

Reply by Councillor McCoy

Thank you. We have in principle agreement with the developers about the prices, although the principles have joined up, I think there's still some negotiation to go on but in our policy we intend to have the same price across all the network.

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Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Steve Cook

If Councillor McCoy could just explain to us the benefits that will be there for the residents there please?

Reply by Councillor McCoy

Thank you Councillor Cook. I do appreciate that if you have not been so closely involved with the project then perhaps the benefits aren't clear. It's a really sustainable project that will raise Sutton's profile as a green borough for a number of reasons. One of which, it's going to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels because it's using almost zero carbon heat energy, it's using energy that would otherwise be wasted. Heat the plant would release into the atmosphere so it's heat energy that's not being used so we'll be capturing it to provide an energy source for residents. And also by reducing reliance on fossil fuels it provides fuel security for residents because we're not reliant on other countries delivering our heat and energy. Some of the other benefits is that by the council providing the energy it means that we're going to have an ethical pricing policy rather than purely a profit driven one as it would be if it was a commercial organisation, and of course any profits generated from the Sutton Decentralised Energy Network are going to be reinvested in Council services, which will help counter some of the budget pressures that we face that have been imposed by this Conservative government. And of course the benefits for developers are that it encourages them and enables them to be more sustainable.

4. Question asked by Emily Brothers, local resident, to Councillor Jayne McCoy, Chair of the Housing, Economy and Business Committee

With earmarking of the Sutton Hospital site for a secondary school, will Sutton Council now agree to put Rosehill Park beyond use for a further secondary school and advise of action being taken to identify a location in the East of the borough?

Reply by Councillor Jayne McCoy, Chair of the Housing, Economy and Business Committee

Thank you Ms Brothers for your question. As Councillor Mathys has indicated, the Council's going to put out its local plan, issues and options document for consultation following agreement at the Housing, Economy and Business meeting on 26th January and part of that consultation will be education provision. In the issues and options document it explains that with a high growth scenario the council could potentially need up to 3 secondary school sites throughout the life of the plan to 2031 to ensure that Sutton's children are catered for in terms of secondary school places in the future. That's obviously predicted on a high growth scenario.

But through the process we are going to be seeking the views of residents on a further nine potential sites for a second allocated secondary school and for a

safeguarded third site. And the list of sites does include part of the Rosehill Recreation Ground.

But the council is a firm believer in giving residents a choice and encouraging them to participate in local decision-making. And so everyone knows the Local Plan Issues and Preferred Options consultation will be opening on 18 February for six weeks and we really do encourage all residents to be fully engaged in the debate, on this and all the other issues raised in the local plan consultation document.

Supplementary Question asked by Emily Brothers

My supplementary is does the council have any plans to redevelop or contract out the football pitch which was the site at Rosehill to be considered for a secondary school, and bearing in mind that the council undertook feasibilities for both Sutton Hospital and Rosehill, are any feasibility studies been identified for any of the other sites on the list that you referred to, Councillor?

Reply by Councillor McCoy

Thank you, sorry, just checking with my colleague. No, the two sites that were originally looked at were based on the original local plan we've got, and feasibility studies as you say were undertaken on those, but as part of the refresh of the local plan we have widened out the search for sites and tried to approach, bearing in mind the shortage of sites, we've tried to approach it a bit more broadly. But no, the local plan doesn't look at the feasibility of those sites yet because as I say we're still going out to consultation with residents so we're not at that stage yet and it takes a while for the local plan to go through all the procedures necessary.

Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Graham Whitham

Thank you Mr Mayor, just for clarification we're still on the first question from Ms Brothers. It's to ask the lead member that whilst I accept the immediacy of the need for additional secondary schools and as she's quite rightly identified we might be looking up to three of them. Could I also ask her to tell us tonight what provision is being made in terms of primary school allocation because working on the task and finish group, that is also a problem we are facing and it will probably put into a better context the real need we have for a number of school sites, not just one or two. Thank you Mr Mayor.

Reply by Councillor McCoy

Thank you Councillor Whitham for highlighting the pressures we face. The projected need that's gone into the work for the local plan on primary school places is that there again is an expected need for three further primary schools, one of which has already been identified for the Hackbridge site. We need to find two more. And the particular pressure with primary schools is that they are location sensitive, they have to be in the area where there is need because of the catchment areas, whereas the secondary school it's less pressure. But what we've

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found is that again there is a shortage of suitable sites for both secondary and primary school and some of the nine sites that are put out to consultation for consideration are secondary school sites are also to consultation for potential for primary school sites so of the nine sites we've got there is double demand on them, and the problem is that there aren't sufficient brownfield sites out there or in the right locations. So it is difficult and there are other pressures on those sites, but I urge you all to have a look at the consultation document and hopefully we've set out quite clearly what the issues are and potential ways of sorting them.

5. Question asked by Emily Brothers, local resident, to Councillor Colin Stears, Chair of the Adult Social Services and Health Committee

With the current consultation on the Care Act (2014), in what ways is Sutton Council minded to go by exceeding national criteria and how will this be funded?

Reply by Councillor Colin Stears, Chair of the Adult Social Services and Health Committee

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Ms Brothers for your question. The only flexibility offered within the Care Act is for Councils to be more generous and apply a less onerous level of need threshold. Sutton could therefore adopt an eligibility assessment of people approaching the Council for help with their social care needs that only required one of the outcomes within the regulations to be unmet, therefore qualifying them for statutory services.

We are awaiting the outcome from the consultation before we can decide what the Council approach will be.

Like any other council, Sutton could take into account the 2% precept allowable on council tax and will of course be very mindful of the outcome of the current consultation.

Supplementary Question asked by Emily Brothers

Thank you for the answer but it didn't really deal with the question and that is what ideas does the local council have in terms of going beyond that criteria, particularly in relation to direct payments and from the answer can I just confirm that the consultation that is currently out to the public does also seek to consult about the social care precept which the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the last autumn statement. Is that correct?

Reply by Councillor Stears

We would all encourage people to take up direct payments for their social services. In terms of the 2% precept that doesn't come under the consultation as you quite rightly point out, the consultation was planned before this came from the chancellor.

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