

## **Scrutiny Streets & Environment Sub-Committee**

Meeting held on Monday, 22 July 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Councillor Alasdair Stewart (Chair), Councillor Mohammed Islam (Vice-Chair), Gayle Gander, Stella Nabukeera, Ria Patel, and Ellily Ponnuthurai

**Also Present:** Councillor Jeet Bains (Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration)  
Executive Mayor Jason Perry  
Councillor Rowenna Davis (Present Virtually)

**Apologies:** Councillor Fatima Zaman

### **PART A**

#### **17/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Corporate Director for Sustainable Communities, Regenerations & Economic Recovery (SCRER) clarified under item '13/24 - Cabinet Report: Proposed Parking Charge Amendments 2024-25' that there was no reference to Workplace Parking Levies in the Council's Parking Policy, nor was there any reference in the paper considered by the Sub-Committee. Members heard that the Council's work programme on parking only related to the agreed Parking Policy and, as a result, consideration of Workplace Parking Levies was not on the work programme.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Sub-Committee asked for an updated on the fixed air quality monitoring station on Wellesley Road and heard that the issue with the unit was as a result of difficulties in finding an appropriate electricity supply or connection. Members were informed that a solution had been found, with meetings to progress this starting in August 2024.

#### **18/24 Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

**19/24 Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

**20/24 Cabinet Report - Bus Shelter Delivery Programme**

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 19 to 52 of the agenda, which provided the report on the Bus Shelter Delivery Programme, due to be considered at Cabinet on the 24 July 2024. The Cabinet Member for Streets & Environment introduced the item followed by a short presentation (Appendix 2 in the agenda pack) from the Acting Head of Commercial Management.

The Sub-Committee asked what market testing had taken place to rule out options two, three and four, and whether the Council had looked at Transport for London's (TfL) model and suppliers to see if this would have been viable for Croydon to deliver independently. The Acting Head of Commercial Management responded that soft market testing had taken place through a questionnaire on the Council's procurement portal; a number of responses had been received and analysed to ascertain the cost of self-delivery. The Council had also looked at the cost of self-delivery through TfL's current supplier.

The Vice-Chair asked for a detailed timeline of the meetings between Valo Smart City UK Ltd and the Council between 2021 and 2023. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that a significant number of meetings had taken place with Valo Smart City UK Ltd, and also with the Council's legal team, to try to ensure that the contract could be delivered. These meetings had resulted in a variation to the contract being agreed through a delegated decision process to try to ensure that a revised programme could be delivered. Members heard that the Council had conducted due diligence on Valo Smart City UK Ltd, but that despite this, none of the promises and commitments made were realised; following this it was recognised that the contract needed to be terminated. The Sub-Committee heard that it was important that the Council went through the correct process to terminate the contract to ensure that it was not legally exposed. It was acknowledged that it had taken some time to terminate the contract, but it was highlighted again that this was necessary to protect the Council from legal exposure.

The Chair asked why it had taken four years to remediate the situation in Croydon with bus shelters and what lessons had been learned from the contract with Valo Smart City UK Ltd. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the initial 12 month contract negotiation with Valo Smart City UK Ltd had taken too long and that the contractor had taken a long time to apply for and progress advertising consents. The Sub-Committee heard that Valo Smart City UK Ltd had been a new entrant into the bus shelter and advertising market and had never delivered public infrastructure or other projects in the UK; as a result of this, the company was unfamiliar with the UK

planning or advertising consent systems and regulatory processes. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that it had taken some time to persuade Valo Smart City UK Ltd that they needed some support from consultants on this and that the company had subsequently stopped using these consultants to save on their costs. Members heard that lessons had been learnt regarding contracting with a new entrant to a market and that this had informed the approach recommended in the paper. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the former contract had focussed on wider outcomes at the expense of the core business of the contract. A large emphasis had also been given to the potential income from the contract, and market testing had now shown was never going to be viable. The Sub-Committee heard that as a result of these combined factors, the Council was always in a difficult position and it was acknowledged that the Council had been too quick to agree to the removal of existing bus shelters and could have looked at purchasing the in-place street furniture. Members heard that these lessons had been reflected in the proposals being considered.

The Sub-Committee asked if the Council had explored the equalities impact of the removal of bus shelters on groups with protected characteristics. The Corporate Director of SCRER responded that he did not believe this had been looked at when bus shelters were removed but acknowledged that this could have affected some groups disproportionately.

Members asked about the process and costs for receiving advertising consents, and whether the Council or TfL would be responsible for acquiring these consents. The Sub-Committee heard that the cost was £578.00 per advertising consent application but that existing consents could likely be utilised where they had already been granted. Members heard that costs for consents were usually borne by the benefitting party, which in this case would be TfL, and that this was the Council's position. The Acting Head of Commercial Management stated that negotiations on this topic had not yet taken place. The Sub-Committee asked about transferring the Council's existing advertising consents to TfL and was informed that this could be done with the provision that what was installed met the conditions of the granted consent.

The Sub-Committee asked about 'Out of Home' (OOH) advertising opportunities that the Council would be exploring and heard that the Council had the opportunity to go to the market, for property it already owned, to invite businesses to advertise on these sites on a concession basis. Members heard that the Council would look to receive a share of this revenue and that primary and secondary high streets would be considered. The Chair asked if the expected advertising revenue from bus shelters had been quantified. Members heard that, based on the previous contract, this had been estimated at £50,000 annually in a best case scenario. The Acting Head of Commercial Management explained that this was not being viewed as lost income as none had been received for this in the last four years and because there was no income expectation for this area in the Council's budget.

Members asked for clarification on how bus shelter sites would be chosen and whether there would be an opportunity for resident input. The Director for Streets & Environment explained that the new bus shelters would be located on the same sites as previously; a dedicated officer would be working at pace to ensure bus shelters were installed at these locations, working in partnership with TfL. The Sub-Committee asked how the delivery plan would be prioritised and heard that this would be decided by TfL in consultation with officers, but locations with the highest footfall and least complicated installations would likely be the first considered. Members acknowledged this, but asked that there be consideration of prioritising areas that most affected vulnerable residents. Members heard that, due to the relationship with TfL, the Council could request this but would not be able to enforce it.

The Chair asked if the Council would have any mechanism to require TfL to install bus shelters at locations where it felt these were necessary. The Acting Head of Commercial Management explained that TfL determined whether a bus shelter should be installed based on a minimum of 50 boardings per day from that particular stop, and that anything outside of this would likely require alternative funding. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that, when the Council self-delivered bus shelters, these locations still had to be agreed with TfL to ensure bus services were still viable.

The Sub-Committee asked about the timeline and mobilisation plan for the delivery of bus shelters. The Acting Head of Commercial Management responded that this was not yet in place but that a dedicated officer would be working on this with TfL, and that TfL were motivated to move at speed to generate additional advertising revenue and improved customer experience.

Members asked about maintenance reporting and responsibility for carrying out repair and cleaning work. The Sub-Committee heard that this would work as it did for all other TfL maintained bus shelters, with maintenance, reporting and cleaning all looked after by TfL. The Director of Streets & Environments explained that maintenance reports to the Council would be passed on to TfL, but that direct reports to TfL were also possible and would be promoted. Maintenance reporting could come through residents, bus drivers and TfL inspections.

The Sub-Committee asked if the Council had spoken with other boroughs currently in a similar relationship with TfL to find out what their experience had been. Members heard that 30 other London boroughs used TfL for bus shelter provision and that TfL were experts in bus shelter delivery who best understood their customers and had existing relationships with suppliers.

Members asked how the Council could ensure delivery of all 114 bus shelters and what would happen if there was slippage in delivery targets. The Director of Streets & Environment explained that the Council had been developing a relationship with TfL in a number of areas; there would be regular programme meetings to monitor and track the delivery of bus shelters and to identify any issues. The Sub-Committee heard that, under the proposed option, there would not be an option for penalties as this was not a contract but a mutual

agreement built on trust. The Corporate Director for SCRER explained that bus shelters were key infrastructure that TfL required to deliver their business, and TfL had previously made clear that the lack of bus shelter provision in the borough was a problem for them. Members heard that the Council would have to look at self-delivery if the proposed option did not deliver bus shelters, but that this would need to be built on the understanding of why this had happened to ensure infrastructure was correct.

Members asked what features the bus shelters would have, and heard that 'countdown' timers would be installed where bus shelters had this previously; outside of this, any additional features would be a commercial decision for TfL. The Sub-Committee asked if the Council would encourage or campaign for additional 'countdown' timers, and heard that Croydon would use its influence to this end where possible as it was acknowledged that this was a positive feature for residents. It was restated that whilst the Council would do its best to influence decision making, it could not dictate to TfL what to do.

The Sub-Committee asked if it would be possible to compile a map of bus stop locations particularly used by vulnerable groups, or close to nurseries, to aid in prioritising the delivery programme of bus shelters. The Director of Streets & Environment explained that the Council did not have the resource to do this and highlighted that TfL decided on placement of bus shelters via usage metrics.

The Executive Mayor thanked the Sub-Committee for their questions and highlighted the reduced risk to the Council by handing the bus shelter responsibility to TfL, who would be motivated to deliver bus shelters at pace. Members heard that TfL had installed four bus shelters in the borough already, based on footfall, and it was stated that this would likely pick up some of the locations the Sub-Committee had raised as particularly affecting vulnerable people, such as hospitals. The Executive Mayor acknowledged that it had taken a long time to remediate the situation, but stated that it had been important to protect the Council from legal exposure.

The Corporate Director for SCRER added that TfL already provided a large amount of infrastructure in the borough (including trams, some A roads, some roundabouts, traffic lights, etc.) and that TfL and the Council already worked in partnership on a daily basis. Members heard that the Council already had a good working partnership with TfL and that this agreement would be an extension of the existing relationship.

## **Conclusions**

1. The Sub-Committee welcomed the decision and encouraged the Council to work with Transport for London (TfL) to ensure that as many bus shelters as possible are delivered at pace and requested a future update on the progress of the delivery programme.

2. The Sub-Committee concluded that they would like an update, once bus shelters had been delivered, to inform Members on the number and types of maintenance requests submitted to TfL by the public, bus drivers and TfL inspectors regarding bus shelter maintenance.
3. The Sub-Committee concluded that they would like to receive an update on advertising consent for bus shelters at a future meeting.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council develop a communication strategy to inform residents how to report maintenance and repair issues regarding bus shelters.
2. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council use its relationship and influence with Transport for London (TfL) to ensure as many new bus shelters as possible feature 'countdown' timers.

### **21/24 Presentation - Update on Grass Cutting**

The Sub-Committee received the presentation set out in the supplementary agenda, which provided an update on grass cutting and Grounds Maintenance in the borough. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods introduced the item. The Executive Mayor acknowledged that the service over the last two years had not been good enough and cited previous cuts to the service and a lack of sustained investment. The Sub-Committee heard that Grounds Maintenance was important to residents and Councillors due to its impact on the look and feel of the borough. The Executive Mayor stated that restoring the service to the appropriate level was a high priority but the hard work of the existing teams was acknowledged. The Sub-Committee heard that there was a clear need for improved management systems and that continued work with contractors needed to be considered, alongside better mapping and training. The Executive Mayor stated that it was important to him to get the service right using the limited resources available to the Council.

The Vice-Chair noted the reduction in Ground Maintenance operatives from 88 to 29 since 2018 and asked how a workforce of this size could cut all grass in the borough on a four-to-six-week schedule. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the staffing reduction had been driven by previous budget savings for the directorate and service. It was acknowledged that additional resource was needed, and that this would likely need to be a mix between Council staff and contractor resource to provide the necessary flexibility in the service. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged that the current resource could not meet a four-to-six-week cutting schedule, due to the scale and diversity of grass cutting required in the borough; Members

heard that record rainfall meant that resource in this year had been under additional stress.

The Chair asked about the mix of Council and contractor staff required to properly resource the service. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods responded that they had reviewed the previous contractors operational model to determine how a four-to-six-week schedule cutting schedule for the borough had been met; this had consisted of roaming crews totalling 38 staff just to deal with highway verges, a dedicated resource for housing, as well as static crews in parks and cemeteries. Members heard that a review process would need to look at the overall resource required as well as how it was deployed to different land types. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods explained that work would need to be done with customers, such as Parks and Housing, to develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to set out what was required and set expectation levels accordingly. Members heard that gaining a full understanding of this would allow the service to better plan for how much contractor resource it would need, and when it would need it throughout the year. The Executive Mayor highlighted that a longer cutting season, the use of contractors and better equipment were all measures being taken forward to improve the service. It was highlighted that SLAs around services for Housing land needed to be developed with better understanding of what was required, which would be assisted by improved mapping once this work was completed.

The Sub-Committee clarified that the cutting season would be extended from March to November, with this reviewed in December. Members heard that if grass cutting could be stood down in January, this would be done to save cost, but if the service was required it would continue.

Members asked how much new plant machinery had been purchased and if this was sufficient to serve the current Council workforce. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods responded that there was enough equipment for the budgeted ten operational crews, with procurement completed and equipment due to be delivered imminently. Members heard that where contractors were used they brought their own equipment. The Chair asked about the lifespan of Grounds Maintenance machinery, and heard that best practice was five years, but that this could be extended to six to seven years through six-weekly inspections and maintenance. The Council conducted six-weekly inspections and maintenance through its in-house fitter and workshop on Factory Lane.

The Sub-Committee noted the Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist undertaking mapping for grass cutting sites in the borough and asked how the maps produced would be verified. Members heard that the GIS used open-source data, which would be quality assured by the Parks Development Team and could then be overlaid with additional detailing around bin locations, meadowing, etc. to ensure that maps were accurate. The Sub-Committee heard that the assurance process would pick up inaccuracies in the open-source data which would then be corrected to produce the final mapping. The Director of Streets & Environment informed

Members that around 200 maps had been produced so far and were undergoing quality assurance with the relevant teams to ensure accuracy. The Executive Mayor agreed that mapping was a vital piece of work and asked that Ward Councillors help in verifying maps for their local areas to ensure that nothing was missed.

The Sub-Committee asked how areas were prioritised for grass cutting and heard that currently everywhere was a priority, with officers working to get to areas that had been missed during April 2024 due to heavy rain. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods explained that work was ongoing to look at how the workforce was deployed and areas were scheduled for grass cutting. The historic approach was that the ten operational crews were responsible for specific geographical areas, but that depending on the land types of different areas, some could take much longer than others. It was explained that there had been some changes to this deployment model, by identifying an area a 'blitz' by five operational crews with targeted cutting over two days; similar diversions had taken place to cut grass in areas or parks where there were planned events. The Director of Streets & Environment explained that the deployment model would be changed once mapping was completed and the Council had a better understanding of different areas and land types to ensure that grass cutting was more consistent across the borough through a prioritised approach. Members asked how many areas had received a grass cutting 'blitz' and heard there had been a number of targeted interventions, including at larger housing estates and in specific areas in the borough. It was acknowledged that this approach could mean that other scheduled work fell behind.

The Sub-Committee asked if mapping would look at the ownership of the land concerned, and heard that mapping would take into account the grassed area in totality and then refined down to the areas that were Council maintained, or were maintained by individual residents (in the case of grass verges) or 'friends' groups. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods clarified that this would not mean that the Council was not accountable for the land maintained by others where it was Council owned, and that these areas would be picked up where grass cutting had not been undertaken by others. The Executive Mayor added that the Council also needed to understand the responsibilities within the Council for land and whether it fell under Highways, Housing or Parks, to ensure that internal charging to the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were correct and that SLAs were in place where needed.

Members noted that the Grounds Maintenance service were undertaking grass cutting for 42 Housing sites and asked how these sites had been chosen and what the expected services were for these locations. The Sub-Committee also raised that some tenants and leaseholders paid specific fees for grass cutting and asked whether this service was provided by Grounds Maintenance. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods stated that Grounds Maintenance was working closely with Housing and that the 42 sites had been identified as these were the most challenging and difficult; services for the smaller sites would then be picked



up for contracted work by Housing through small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Members heard that the list of sites serviced by Grounds Maintenance was flexible and was under review alongside Housing colleagues. The Sub-Committee raised concerns that there was not information available for the sites not being maintained by Grounds Maintenance on when grass cutting would take place. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods acknowledged this and stated that there would be a discussion with Housing that week on an agreed response on when and how these sites would be maintained.

The Sub-Committee asked how the cost of using contractors compared to a fully in-housed service and whether the Council would produce a Wild Meadow Strategy. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods responded that a Wild Meadow Strategy was currently being written and would focus on the green corridor and identifying suitable sites and cutting schedules. The Sub-Committee encouraged officers to include residents in identifying wild meadowing locations. Members heard that the Council was using existing fully procured contractors, such as FM Conway, Glendale and Bushells; there was already an agreed schedule of day and area rates for these contractors. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods explained that the Council was looking to use the best schedule of rates available for the activities that needed to be undertaken and that the competitiveness of the original procurement was being used to ensure best value for money. The Sub-Committee heard that the wider review would look to provide more certainty of the work required over six to eight month periods which could provide savings over the schedule of rates in place as these focussed more on one off services. Members asked if there was expected to be budget growth for Grounds Maintenance and heard that, once the review was fully concluded, it was possible that there may need to be a growth bid during the next budget process.

Members asked for the timeline for producing the Wild Meadow Strategy and whether there had been consideration of bringing forward 'garden streets' and linking these with 'Street Champions'. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods responded that the Wild Meadow Strategy would likely be completed in October 2024 but that work on 'garden streets' was ongoing. The Director of Streets & Environment added that once the Council understood its assets it could be more targeted in reaching out to the community around schemes of this nature.

The Sub-Committee asked if the timing of 'No Mow May' would be changed to reflect the increased grass cutting period. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods explained that this could be picked up through the Wild Meadow Strategy but explained that this was a national campaign.

The Vice-Chair asked if the HRA would be compensated where the cutting schedule had not been met. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the agreement that had been made with Housing was for grass cutting at the 42 identified sites, in return for the level of recharge that the HRA paid. Members heard that compensation might be appropriate if more services had

been agreed but had not been delivered, but that this was not the case. It was clarified that the level of recharge to the HRA was low and that the Grounds Maintenance service had been clear what could be delivered for this amount by identifying only the 42 larger HRA sites.

The Vice-Chair asked what plans were in place to ensure that grass cutting took place to an expected level next year. The Corporate Director of SCRER accepted that the service had not performed to the expected level and apologised, but stated that this was not down to any lack of effort on the part of Grounds Maintenance. The Sub-Committee heard that the review taking place, and other measure discussed earlier in the item, would contribute to an improved service in future. The Executive Mayor stated that rebuilding a service was difficult and took time.

The Sub-Committee asked if there were plans to provide grass cutting schedules to residents but acknowledged that this could be difficult and weather dependent. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods explained that providing this information through a digital interactive map on the website was an aspiration and that the provider had delivered this in contracts for other authorities.

Members asked whether hedge cutting work would take place during or after the grass cutting season. The Head of Environment Services & Sustainable Neighbourhoods responded that traditionally hedge cutting and tree trimming took place after the grass cutting season from October/November; with the increased cutting season, it was acknowledged that there would be less opportunity to do this. The Sub-Committee were informed that this would be addressed by maintaining contractor resource for longer than had been the case previously to ensure that these works could be completed. Members were informed that where tree or hedge growth presented a trip or health hazard this would still be prioritised during the grass cutting season.

## **Conclusions**

1. The Sub-Committee concluded that they would like to review the Grounds Maintenance resourcing plan for 2025/26 ahead of the budget setting process.
2. The Sub-Committee raised some concerns about the grass cutting service being provided to Housing sites, other than the 42 identified for services by Grounds Maintenance.
3. The Sub-Committee concluded that it would like to add the Wild Meadow Strategy to its Work Programme.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Sub-Committee welcomed the aspiration for the implementation of a fully digital map of borough parks on the Council website to reflect

information on the last and next planned grass cutting and recommended that this be formally included on the Ground Maintenance work plan.

## **22/24 Presentation - Update on Grant Funded Regeneration Programmes**

The Sub-Committee received the presentation set out in the supplementary agenda, which provided an update on Grant Funded Regeneration Programmes, including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Levelling Up Fund, Historic England and Greater London Authority (GLA) Good Growth Fund. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration introduced the item followed by the Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration.

The Sub-Committee asked how Levelling Up Fund programmes integrated with wider work on Town Centre regeneration and whether bid submitted could be changed following business and community feedback. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration responded that there was good scope for changing details to ensure projects were deliverable; it was acknowledged that it was necessary for plans to evolve as projects become more detailed. Members heard that where there were changes there was engagement with key stakeholders and partners and that a communications plan around this was currently in the works. It was explained that simple changes could be enacted easily, but more major changes would need to go through a formal change control process with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there was constant engagement with partners delivering regeneration in the borough through various platforms, including the Mayor's Town Centre Advisory Board. The Sub-Committee heard that a wider vision, spatial strategy and regeneration plan for the Town Centre was being developed to bring the different plans together and look at the Town Centre as a whole.

The Sub-Committee asked whether the Croydon Urban Room was focused on Town Centre regeneration or if it featured information on wider regeneration happening in the borough. Members further asked if the presentation received by the Sub-Committee and the full Regeneration Strategy could be added to the Urban Room website. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration responded that the Urban Room had predominantly focussed on the Town Centre, and was funded through the Growth Zone, but currently had a display on the Local Plan Review which was borough wide. Members heard that the Urban Room was a good resource for engaging with all residents about the borough as a whole and provided borough context for Town Centre regeneration. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that the easy-read Town Centre Regeneration Strategy on the Urban Room website had been provided to stimulate engagement for defining the Town Centre strategic vision; as the Council developed the Town Centre strategic vision in Autumn 2024 the

website would be updated with additional documents, such as the Spatial Framework and Delivery Plan. It was confirmed that a link to the presentation could be added to the Urban Room website.

Members asked how long procurement to deliver Levelling Up Fund programmes would take, whether safety and anti-social behaviour had been considered as part of the Historic England and GLA Good Growth Funded South Norwood scheme, and whether the Council would be bidding for more GLA Good Growth projects. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that the major Levelling Up Fund procurements would be going out in July 2024, with it expected that procurement would be completed in November 2024 and schemes built out in December 2024. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that safety and anti-social behaviour had not been a part of the criteria for the Historic England and GLA Good Growth Fund, however, it was thought that projects that improved the vitality of a high street would have a knock on effect in terms of surveillance and footfall. Members heard that this was a consideration under the UKSPF as it was set out in the criteria. The Sub-Committee heard that the Council always sought additional funding and bidding opportunities where available.

The Sub-Committee discussed anecdotal evidence that there had been graffiti on shop fronts in South Norwood and asked whether the Historic England and GLA Good Growth Fund would contribute towards any ongoing maintenance or repairs. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration responded that look, feel and cleanliness fell outside the scope of the funding which only covered the initial capital investment.

Members commended the approach the Council was taking in reaching out to residents in developing these plans and explained how this had brought communities together. The Sub-Committee raised concerns that residents may be reluctant to engage with the Council where they felt their voices had not been heard in the past. The Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration responded that there were a number of ways to build trust, goodwill and community, highlighting how the Historic England and GLA Good Growth Funded South Norwood scheme had been built around the local history of the area and the differences that even small elements of regeneration could bring.

The Sub-Committee asked what specific key performance indicators were being used to measure the successes of the various regeneration projects. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that, for the Levelling Up Fund programmes, these included economic indicators, footfall, air quality, wellbeing, and more. Members heard that the success indicators were included in the initial bid and could be shared if requested. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that funding agreements laid out expected outputs and that monitoring took place quarterly with all of the funders, in addition to internal monitoring by the Council.

Members raised concerns that a market on London Road could create competition for Surrey Street market and asked what measures were being

considered to ensure that both markets would be able to thrive. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged this concern and explained that the Council was liaising with a group of London Road traders around the kind of market that would work in the location. The Sub-Committee heard that London Road market would likely be a very different type of market to Surrey Street, and that the Council would always strive not to create competition by delivering a different offer. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that the UKSPF would look at whether there was infrastructure that could go into London Road to enable a market, but that the first step was for traders to demonstrate that there was a viable proposal.

The Sub-Committee asked if the Mayor's Town Centre Advisory Board had minutes that could be published and heard that, whilst short notes were taken, many conversations were about commercial operations, and that it would not be appropriate to produce and publish minutes.

### **Conclusions**

1. The Sub-Committee welcomed the resident and stakeholder engagement that had already taken place as part of the regeneration schemes discussed and encouraged officers to continue this wherever possible.
2. The Sub-Committee were encouraged by the Council's success in bidding for projects under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Levelling Up Fund, Historic England and Greater London Authority (GLA) Good Growth Fund and welcomed that the Council would continue to bid for regeneration funding wherever it was available.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Sub-Committee commended the Urban Room project and recommended that the Urban Room website be used to publish all relevant documentation on regeneration happening in the borough, including the presentation received by the Sub-Committee.

## **23/24 Period 10 Financial Performance Report**

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 53 to 92 of the agenda that provided the Cabinet Report on Period 9 Financial Performance for Members to ascertain whether they are reassured about the delivery of the 2022-23 Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery (SCRER) Budget. The Corporate Director of SCRER introduced the item.

Members asked about increased costs in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Transport caused by an increase in the number of young people eligible for Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs). The Corporate

Director of SCRER responded that costs could sometimes be reduced by increasing specialist educational provision in-borough, however, this could be limited by those in mainstream schooling wanting to move to newer or improved provision. The Sub-Committee heard that out of borough provision was only one reason for an increased overspend and that there were local and national increases in the numbers of young people with EHCPs who are eligible for home to school transport. The Corporate Director of SCRER highlighted that personal travel budget and travel training schemes were ongoing, but that these were voluntary and therefore only have a limited impact upon managing the increase in demand for transport services. Members were informed that work to ascertain whether muster points were achievable was ongoing, but it was noted that some needs were so high that individuals needed to travel alone or with a personal assistant, which could limit how effective muster points might be. Members asked about staffing challenges and heard that there had been issues with vacancies for travel trainers in the previous year; there was turnover for other staffing areas (such as personal assistants and drivers) but that this was generally manageable.

The Vice-Chair asked what processes were in place to address departments experiencing budget pressures and the Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there was a monthly monitoring process that included assurance meetings at a directorate and corporate level. Where there were budget pressures, it was incumbent on budget holders to look for ways to reduce those service pressures or for other ways to mitigate the pressure through finding savings elsewhere.

Members asked what lessons had been taken forward to setting more realistic income targets in Planning and Parking Enforcement. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there had been an adjustment to parking targets at the beginning of 2023/24 and that these were now set to the correct level.

Members raised concerns about staffing underspends and heard that recruitment processes could take a long time which always created a vacancy factor across a large workforce. Recruitment had been taking place and it was noted that vacancies had been held where services had been ceased in the 2023/24 period and that these would no longer appear in 2024/24 monitoring reports.

## **Conclusions**

The Sub-Committee concluded that it would like to continue monitoring SEND Transport as it received the Financial Monitoring Reports for 2024/25.

## **24/24 Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Recommendations**

Members asked how residents could feed into the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in the borough and heard that individual projects did

undergo community engagement and was often resident led, but that the Council did not have resources for wider engagement than it was currently undertaking. Members asked how CIL allocation could be made more transparent and the Corporate Director of SCRER responded that this was done through the annual publication of the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

The Sub-Committee noted report.

**25/24 Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25**

The Sub-Committee noted report and discussed:

- Including some information on fly-tipping enforcement under the Cleaner Croydon update item scheduled for October 2024.
- A briefing on the Waste Procurement Contract Award ahead of the October 2024 meeting.
- A briefing on the Carbon Neutral Action Plan ahead of its consideration by the Sub-Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.31 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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