

In attendance (panel):

Chair Robert Doyle (RD)  
LBL Cllr Lib Peck, Cabinet Member, Housing and Regeneration (LP),  
Cllr Rachel Heywood, Cabinet Member, Culture and Communities (RH),  
Peter Jones – Divisional Director, Cultural Services (PJ),  
Alison Fryer, Interim Divisional Director, Regeneration and Enterprise (AF)

### 1. Welcome, introductions, apologies

Lee Alley (Streatham Action) welcomed all, commented on the good turnout and noted that he would be gathering contact details from those interested in being on Streatham Action's mailing list at the end of the meeting. The panel introduced themselves. No one from Tesco's was able to attend the meeting

### 2. Notes from the last public meeting

RD suggested that the minutes of the October meeting were not to be formally adopted but were provided for information.

### 3. Streatham Leisure Centre

#### a) Why is it closed?

RH explained that the decision was taken to close Streatham Leisure Centre (SLC) on advice from engineers following concerns from officers about risks to users. A full structural survey was commissioned and consideration is now being given to the best way forward.

PJ added that a number of surveys had been carried out and the intention had been to keep SLC open until the opening of new provision. £1.4m had been secured to carry out necessary maintenance work over the next two financial years. Engineers uncovered unforeseen issues relating to ceiling, roofs and power supply which led to closure on the grounds of health and safety.

#### b) Why did Lambeth allow Clapham to close at the same time?

RH explained that the decision to invest in improved leisure facilities in Clapham was a strategic one intended to address long term under-investment in leisure. The closure of SLC was unforeseen. LP noted that although it is unfortunate that Clapham and Streatham LCs are closed at the same time, the scheme at Clapham is a good one that will provide leisure, library and health facilities. It will open in 2011. RH added that works being carried out at Brixton are to improve access to the pool and will be complete within a month. Some of the funding is being provided by Sport England and delaying the works could have risked losing the funding.

#### c) What does Lambeth plan to do next?

RH stated that the Council have provided a temporary swimming pool on the old Lilian Baylis School site. The Council is currently considering alternative and longer term temporary gym and swimming provision in Streatham.

RD opened the floor, and the following points were made/questions asked:

- What would it have cost to make good the disrepair that was uncovered?  
RH stated that the answer to this question was not known, however what is known is that the necessary works would take between 12-18 months to complete and would give additional lifespan of 2-5 years. There has been insufficient investment for decades, hence the commitment to new provision in Streatham.  
PJ – we cannot be prescriptive without a tender process but the figure could be in excess of £2m
- With reference to the annual budget report of 2008/9, there was a recognition that the cost of repairs to SLC made them uneconomic to carry out, but there seems to have been no plan as to how to move forward.  
RH stated that the Council is in negotiations to put new facilities on the site. There is a recognition that SLC is reaching the end of its life, but that end point was not predicted to be so

imminent. Budget was made available for increasing repairs and maintenance over the next few years

- Will there be no leisure provision in Streatham until the new LC is built?

RH stated that the Council is currently considering a number of temporary options including

- i) The provision of a gym including 40-60 gym stations and a dance studio for 2-3 years. This would quickly provide a good modern facility.
- ii) The provision of a temporary pool, larger than that at old Lilian Baylis. This would be around 20-25m.

- What facilities are there for local swimmers to train for the London Olympics in an appropriate-sized pool?

RH – we can provide a temporary facility subject to finding suitable site. A gym can be built within 4 weeks. We need to speak to local amenity societies about sites for a swimming pool. We could consider the car park at The Rookery on Streatham Common. However appropriate sites are limited.

- Wandsworth Council have managed to keep buildings of a similar age, eg Balham Leisure Centre, in good repair. Why not Lambeth?

- We need swimming pools, there are plenty of gyms in Streatham

- We want permanent facilities, not temporary ones

- Why will the Council not give us any information about what it knew about the state of SLC before it closed? (Tim Barnsley)

PJ – a Freedom of Information (FOI) request was made on 26/11/09. A response was released on 26/1/10. I would like to apologize on behalf of the Council if it has not reached Mr Barnsley but can hand it over now.

- Will there be proper (25m+) facilities before 2012?

RH – we will do all we can to make this happen.

- What about the derelict Access Storage site? (Mr Brown)

**Action: RH requested that PJ investigate**

- If a temporary facility is for 2-3 years can we assume we won't have a permanent facility for 2-3 years?

LP – it is difficult to say but that is a likely timeframe. We understand the priority need for a swimming pool.

- Given the limited opportunities currently for swimming in the borough, will the Council have to give back funding from central government for free swimming for under 16s/over 60s?

RH – no, LBL leisure concessions can be used in adjoining boroughs. A small grants scheme is being made available to groups who have been displaced by recent closures. **Action: Details of this to be made available with minutes of this meeting.**

#### 4. Streatham Ice Rink/The Streatham Hub development

LP – at the meeting in October 09 we were confident that resolution would be achieved by December 09. This has not happened. Much constructive and collaborative work has gone on with Tesco's and we have always stressed the Council's key principles and policies which are:

- i) The development must include good quality leisure facilities which meet the needs of local people
- ii) There must be continuity of ice provision. The approved scheme includes this as a result of planning requirements and there is no dilution to this commitment.

Tesco's are now considering and will take the decision on the future of the scheme at their March Board meeting. A report will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting in March which will either recommend continuing with the approved scheme or will put forward an alternative approach. We are aware of the current condition of the ice rink.

RD opened the floor, and the following points were made/questions asked:

- Why can't the Council introduce a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)?

SF – the Development Agreement (DA) relates to the approved scheme. If this agreement comes to an end the Council would consider its options possibly including a CPO. A CPO could take two years from start to finish.

- Commercial organizations have not always delivered on planning obligations

LP – I can take up specific issues relating to other areas outside the meeting.

- What actions have been taken to bind Tesco in to committing to the development as a whole?

LP - we appreciate the community's frustration and know that the expectation is that the Council must secure the best possible deal for Streatham residents.

SF – this is a major planning application with a package of development subject to a Section 106 agreement and Development Agreement. These documents are robust. Three meetings have now taken place to consider the detail of the scheme. We need to be confident about the land assembly. Issues of sequencing are critical – the LC must open before the supermarket.

- There has been a lack of investment in the south of the borough
- The pool and the rink are in a bad state. What are Lambeth and Tesco's doing about it?
- Games have had to be cancelled due to the state of the rink. Streatham Ice Arena is in a very poor state compared with every other ice rink in the country.
- Tesco received three competitive tenders for the works, but the scheme came to a halt. Why was this (Cllr Heather)?

LP – if the previous scheme was not economically viable for Tesco's it is their right not to proceed. It is our right to come back on revised proposals.

- Continuity of ice rink provision must include provision for the Redskins, for competitive skaters to train and for full community use as at present. It is not just about providing a temporary rink. (Secretary – Streatham Ice Skating Action Group)
- Will the Council put money into the ice rink before it closes?

LP – we are not responsible for the current rink. We have an obligation to support the provision of a new rink.

- Is there an obligation on Tesco's to keep the rink fit for purpose?

**Action: LP to come back to Streatham Action on this**

- What is the back up plan? (Cllr Lumsden)

LP – we will look at all scenarios but must adhere to the spirit of the existing development agreement and not compromise our position. The back up plan is not temporary provision. We will need a firm and considered 'Plan B' but we cannot currently consider this. There is a difference between considering and scenario planning.

SF – not all the land is owned by Tesco. The Council own a 'ransom strip'.

- We think Tesco's back up plan is to wait until the rink is unusable.
- We need comfort that Tesco's won't renege on the new deal. We should put Tesco's on notice. If we don't get what we want in March the Council should look at other alternatives. Action is needed. (Chuka Umunna)
- How can we hold Tesco's to account?

SF – Tesco have not reneged. After the Tesco Board meeting in March the Cabinet will consider a report that will either recommend continuing with the approved scheme or recommend an alternative way forward. The Council understand the urgency. An approved scheme is on the table and due to commercial confidentiality we cannot currently talk about other approaches.

- The Council must make sure s106 conditions are enforced and reject proposed variations from developers.
- The D A is not protective of the rink. It allows for up to three weeks closure and a maximum of six weeks closure in a year.
- Tesco must insist that Starburst are obliged to fulfil a proper maintenance agreement in relation to the existing rink.

LP – this meeting is the mandate to do this. **Action: LP to ensure strong messages from this meeting are conveyed to Tesco.** An immediate injection of cash from Tesco to improve the immediate condition of the ice rink would generate confidence.

We are very clear that we expect a well-equipped new leisure centre and continuity of ice provision from Tesco's. This is backed up through the planning process. We know the urgency of the situation and are very conscious about the state of the ice and the general condition of the Ice Arena as a whole. However the Council does not own the building and this complicates the situation. **Action: LP will set a time frame of one month to come back to members of the public using the Streatham Action network and other channels of communication with an update on what can be done regarding the condition of the rink**

- Can Tesco's terminate the agreement with Starburst and put it in Council control?
- Responsibility for leisure facilities should lie with the Council
- We should take direct action to make sure Tesco's know how we feel. I will be protesting outside Tesco on Streatham High Road on 27/2 at 11am and all are welcome to join me. (Patricia Sauer). We should all email Terry Leahy of Tesco's.

LP – it is always important to get voices heard. Letters and emails would be very sensible. We appreciate the legal issues. We are now moving into the final stage of negotiations. All parties share the frustration.

- The community is relying on the Council to get what the community needs. Tesco knows the Council has no back up plan.
  - We must not be afraid of Tesco's lawyers.
  - Reporters cannot interview rink users as they are not allowed in the building.
  - Tesco have disbanded a lot of their development teams.
- LP – Tesco have downsized but they are still working with us on this scheme.
- We must have reassurance about the Cabinet meeting in March, we were told in October there would be a follow up statement in December (Chris Nicholson)
  - March is the absolute deadline. This needs to be taken up at a regional level.
  - Some of language sounds as if the Council is being subservient to Tesco's.
- RH – we are proud we have a regional facility but not proud of its poor state. We will stress the urgency with Tesco and raise our concerns. We are not being subservient.
- What is the date of the Cabinet meeting? (RD)
- LP – I will circulate the date to the network and can confirm it is in March. Cllr Bennett confirmed date of Cabinet meeting as 22/03, 7pm.

##### **5. Other Streatham Community buildings 'at risk'?**

- If the same team are responsible for all Council buildings, what about continuity of reading at Streatham Library? (RD)
- RH - £350k has been put aside. There is £40k for a full structural survey of library buildings. We must take a strategic approach to ensure that buildings are fit for purpose. We will not be closing any libraries. We will be putting the majority of the funding into Streatham Library, recognizing that it needs the works. £60k has been spent on the boiler system. We are spending money on various issues at Streatham Library. Subsidence has been addressed, along with health and safety issues. The first floor is currently closed but this is not resulting in a significant diminution in service. We are working hard to achieve what we need to over the coming years.

The Chair, Robert Doyle, thanked LBL and the community for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm