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RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday 20 December 2019

3 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING (Pages 3 - 8)

The answers to questions for written reply are attached.

Copies of the documents referred to above can be obtained from
<http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/>

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Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee

20th December 2019

Public Questions to the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio Holder for written reply

1. From Susan Movahedi

Where will all the various organisations that currently use the public hall be able to hold their meetings etc?

Reply:

If this scheme goes ahead, they can be held in the new library at the Public Hall.

2. From Susan Movahedi

Where will local residents without access to the internet be able to go to use computers for research and day to day needs - especially those who are perhaps unemployed or even homeless?

Reply:

As above, in the new library.

3. From Jennifer Smith

Given that the new proposed town hall site needs £400,000 worth of work, where will the library be housed while this work is being undertaken? As it is my understanding that from the survey of work carried out which produced that figure there is no way a business of any kind could just move straight in without any work being done.

Reply:

The current library would stay open whilst the new library was constructed. There would be no gap in provision.

4. From Jennifer Smith

What will happen to the library staff during this transition? Many of whom are locals themselves and should be commended that while being out on strike are having to endure this additional stress.

Reply:

The staff will work in the library as normal.

5. From Louisa Cook

Please can you share your plans for the new location and share your impact assessment you have made on taking this building out of action for the current community groups and activities which regularly use it?

Reply:

All plans/documents are in the public domain and were provided as appendices to the report.

6. From Louisa Cook

What decision making route has the Council used to make this decision? And why has there been so little consultation?

Reply:

The decision route is as per this initial report. The Executive was asked to take the decision.

7. From Julia Vanoli MCIPD

Why was there a lack of public consultation on the decision to demolish our existing Library site and replace with flats in the lead up to the planning proposal for this site?

Reply:

Consultation will take place if the work determines that the scheme is viable. This is set out in the report.

8. From Julia Vanoli MCIPD

How many elected local councillors are in favour of this proposal and what have they done to find out what their constituents think, in light of a petition with 5,000 signatures being submitted since the planning proposals were made public.

Reply:

This is unknown, however the report was positively scrutinised by two PDS committees and the recommendations approved by the Executive.

9. From Konkona Kundu

Why is a different location not being considered for example the corner one storied building diagonally opposite to the Odeon near the war memorial instead of the library which is the part of our community?

Reply:

All land in the Council's ownership continues to be considered for housing.

10. From Konkona Kundu

What other ideas were considered before deciding on destroying the library?

Reply:

We wish to undertake a viability assessment. The aim is a better library for Beckenham and more much needed homes.

11. From Nigel Foley

What facilities will be lost in transferring the library to Beckenham Public Hall, both in terms of current library facilities and current uses of the Public Hall?

Reply:

It is envisaged that there will be no loss of facilities, however we need to undertake the viability work.

12. From Nigel Foley

Given that the area is within the Elm Road Conservation area, what constraints will be applied to any development e.g. in terms of height and appearance?

Reply:

Any development will take the conservation area into account as already addressed in the massing study provided as an appendix to the report.

13. From Lucy Williams

Can you confirm that the proposed development of the site does not conflict with the terms that the land was originally gifted over 100 years ago by Albermarle Cator?

Reply:

It does not.

14. From Lucy Williams

I have seen bats flying around the building in the summer and believe they are hibernating in the library building. Are the Council aware of bats at the building and have Natural England been consulted about this?

Reply:

We are at viability stage, any bat surveys would be conducted further along the process.

15. From Natalie Moss

I am a regular user of the children's sport classes at Beckenham public halls. The proposed library move to this site will significantly damage public spaces, particularly for sport. What will happen to all the classes, in particular the sports classes which need large spaces, currently taking place there?

Reply:

Modern libraries are as much about community activity as they are about issuing books. There is no reason why activities of this nature cannot continue. However this will specifically be looked at during the viability stage.

16. From Natalie Moss

Are there any plans to create new publicly available spaces/sports facilities for sports and other classes to replace those to be lost at Beckenham public halls if the library moves there, or will Beckenham now lose these facilities?

Reply:

No because there is no anticipated loss at this stage. As per response above.

17. From Nick Metcalf

What community groups currently use the space that would be redeveloped at Beckenham Public Halls?

Reply:

There are a range of groups who use the space, from a Church group to yoga class.

18. From Nick Metcalf

Have you considered replacing Beckenham Library with a new building with a library and community rooms on the ground floor and flats on the floors above?

Reply:

As per previous response.

19. From Catherine Hildebrand

The Beckenham library site and adjacent green space has over 20 mature trees of a variety of species. I understand the plans for the new site involve some green space. How many of the existing trees do you hope to retain through the period of construction?

Reply:

This will only be known once we undertake the viability work. However the massing study that was produced (provided as an appendix to the report) shows that zero loss of green space could be achieved.

20. From Catherine Hildebrand

The Library and Beckenham Spa car parks between them always have spaces available as they are used for short-stay parking. Given the car park nearest the Public Halls site is predominantly used by commuters, has there been any research into availability and waiting time for parking spaces at different days and times?

Reply:

No, because we are not at that stage yet. It would be considered as part of the viability work.

21. From Eve Bolton

Will the flats be an ugly modern design or after spending billions making Beckenham "more villagey" will you continue the theme and stick to traditional architecture that will complement the building opposite and the houses across the road?

Reply:

A traditional architectural style is envisaged at this stage.

22. From Colette Laws-Chapman

Can you please let us know why you would consider closing the Beckenham library, Beckenham Spa/Clock House when it is such a vital community hub in this area?

Reply:

At this stage we merely wish to undertake a viability assessment. The aim is a better library for Beckenham and more much needed homes.

23. From Colette Laws-Chapman

The area has been slowly regenerating - with thanks to Love my Hound, 500 degree pizza and Three Hounds Beer company joining the Spa combined with the library as the core/real attractions - the library is so accessible at the moment - families combine it with a trip to the spa as they can park and it's close by - moving it would be both ridiculous - and damaging to access by all the people at this end of Beckenham plus further increase traffic in an already congested area of Beckenham.

Reply:

The Equality Impact Assessment does not show that there would be a negative impact on people.

24. From Dr Elizabeth Arno

You suggest that Biggin Hill and Orpington libraries are being used more frequently now that they have moved to town-centre locations. Both these libraries, however, have been moved into buildings where there are other leisure facilities, notably swimming pools (the Walnuts in Orpington and the Biggin Hill Memorial Library and Pool), which is a very similar set-up to that of the current Beckenham Library and Spa complex (the 3rd most popular library in the borough as it is).

Please could you provide full statistics for the use of all your libraries? Isn't it more likely that these libraries have become more popular as parts of larger leisure offerings, which just happen to be in town-centre locations?

Reply:

The data can be provided, however in the meantime I suggest looking at the bi-annual libraries report that is scrutinised by the RRH PDS.

25. From Dr Elizabeth Arno

Why is Beckenham Library, a fine and elegant example of late art deco architecture, not considered worthy of conservation by the London Borough of Bromley, particularly as part of the Elm Road Conservation Area?

Reply:

We wish to undertake a viability assessment. The aim is a better library for Beckenham and more much needed homes.

26. From Philip King

Please can you provide the covenants detailing the land that the Library occupies, the details of the conservation area that was gifted to the public and why and when you changed this to remove these covenants?

Reply:

The library site, together with other land, was acquired by the Council from John Cator on the 15th February 1911 following the exercise by the Council of an option to purchase the said land contained in two leases previously granted to the Council by Albemarle Cator Esq and others.

The only covenant imposed on the Council in the conveyance dated 15th February 1911 was in respect of maintenance of a wall on one of the boundaries and fences along the southern and northern boundaries.

The Council had, in 1899, previously acquired land to the west of the site which was subject to various covenants and subsequently in 1923 acquired the land to the north of the previously acquired land, which was similarly subject to covenants. These covenants were varied by a deed dated 31st May 1932 and then released by a deed dated 16th July 1984.

It is likely that we will not have details as to the reasoning for the variation and release given the amount of time that has passed.