

RENEWAL AND RECREATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 12 April 2011

Present:

Councillor Sarah Phillips (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Tickner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Brian Humphrys, Councillor John Ince,
Councillor Pauline Tunnicliffe, Councillor John Getgood
and Councillor Tom Papworth

Also Present:

Councillor Julian Benington, Councillor Stephen Carr and
Councillor Mrs Anne Manning

59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Russell Jackson.

60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of Item 7, the Chairman declared that she was a governor at Bromley Adult Education College.

In respect of Item 7, Councillor John Getgood declared that his wife was a voluntary tutor at Bromley Education College.

61 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15TH FEBRUARY 2011

The minutes of the Recreation and Renewal Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 15th February 2011 were considered. Referring to Minute 57, Councillor Brian Humphrys highlighted that proposing Option 4 as a first step did not preclude the adoption of other options later on.

Turning to Minute 54, the Chairman asked for an update regarding the introduction of chip and pin across all Bromley libraries. The Assistant Director: Culture reported that there had been a slight delay in the implementation as a result of the change in the Council's IT provider, and a number of issues needed to be resolved before the implementation could progress.

Councillor Michael Tickner requested an updated on a number of reports that Members had requested be presented to the Committee. The Assistant Director: Culture confirmed that a report on the variable message system for Bromley Town Centre would come to a future meeting, and the Olympics report would be presented to the July 2011 meeting. Councillor Tickner suggested a Senior Officer check the minutes before each meeting to ensure that the timescales reported were accurate.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Recreation and Renewal Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15th February 2011 be agreed.

62 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES AND UPDATES

Members considered the report outlining the matters arising from previous meetings. There were 4 items:

That a preparatory report on Penge Town Centre be prepared for the Committee, within existing resources.

That the Bromley Town Centre Variable Messaging System was deferred from the meeting on 15th February and would be considered at a future meeting.

A report on the Christmas Lights Policy would be considered later in the meeting.

A further libraries report around Option 4 providing detailed costs and savings would be considered later in the meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

63 QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE

No questions were received.

64 QUESTIONS FOR THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

No questions were received.

65 RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO - PREVIOUS DECISIONS

The Committee noted the decisions taken by the Portfolio Holder since the last meeting.

**66 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION
PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

**66.a BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - 2010/11
Report DRR11/031**

The Director of Renewal and Recreation introduced a report setting out the latest budget monitoring position for 2010/11 for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio based on expenditure and activity levels up to January 2011. This showed a projected underspend of £179,000.

The Committee considered the savings that had been built into the libraries budget. A Member highlighted that the Department functioned within its budget, and expressed the hope that budgeted savings on staff would be less in the next financial year.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee scrutinise the current budget of the Department. The Director for Renewal and Recreation agreed that this would be helpful and undertook to arrange a programme of budget scrutiny for the Committee.

A Member highlighted that there was no way of knowing whether the shortfall in income for hire charges for DVDs and CDs was due to the economic climate, as high street retailers of music and DVDs were also struggling. The member suggested that a more pessimistic view of the service should be taken and a more realistic budget set.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the latest budget projection for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio and that a programme be established to allow the Committee to scrutinise the agreed Renewal and Recreation budget for 2011/2012.

**66.b LIBRARY SERVICE - SHARED WORKING
Report DRR11/027**

Prior to considering the report, the Chairman invited the Staff-Side Secretary to address the Committee. The Staff-Side Secretary highlighted the concern and uncertainty that the proposals for shared working had caused amongst staff and residents, and asked Members to make their decisions in a timely manner in order to minimise uncertainty.

The Assistant Director Renewal and Recreation introduced the report updating Members on the outcome of discussions with the London Borough of Bexley on 'shared services'. The report also provided Members with a clear indication of the likely levels of saving that could be achieved through the adoption of such an approach. The report made a number of recommendations with regard to the library branch network and identified a range of savings that could be realised.

The Chairman highlighted the importance of exploring all the available options and taking a considered decision. The library service was a valued service across the Borough and decisions should not be rushed.

In considering the report Members stressed that no Councillor relished closing libraries in the Borough but that savings had to be made as a result of the economic climate. Members suggested that the hours of libraries should extend beyond office hours and should include at least one evening a week.

A Member suggested that it would be better to have libraries run by volunteers than to see them close. In any event, it was important for Members to make a decision in order to minimise uncertainty for residents and staff.

Members also commented that there was insufficient detail within the report to make a decision, but that Members were not being asked to take a decision at this time as there was more work to be done. A Member requested that any future report outline the role of volunteers in Bexley's libraries, but stressed that a report should come to the Committee only when issues were resolved and there were firm decisions for Members to take.

Another Member stressed that the Borough's libraries benefitted from well-trained staff with specific skills and that volunteers might not have these skills. The Member asked that more detail be provided to Members regarding the impact of the proposals at the point of delivery.

Another Member acknowledged that change was always difficult and that the library service was an emotive issue as residents did not want to see libraries closed. The Member highlighted that usage of libraries had changed over time and if they were to remain open, consideration had to be given to the best use of the available space and the buildings had to be made more multi-functional.

The Assistant Director Renewal and Recreation reported that following the Committee's meeting in February 2011, Officers had hoped that work on the 'shared services' proposals would be completed by the April meeting, unfortunately negotiations had taken longer than expected. Key principles had now been agreed with the London Borough of Bexley and Officers would be in a position to report back to Members in July 2011.

A Member questioned whether the savings outlined in the report were for Bromley alone or whether they were joint savings. The Assistant Director confirmed that the outlined savings were for Bromley, and would be achieved as a result of changes to the back office function. There had been some discussions with staff, but these could be further progressed once the decision had been taken to pursue the 'shared services' option. No changes to staff pay and conditions were being proposed and staff would be employed by their respective Boroughs. The Assistant Director reported that he had attended the Local Joint Consultative Committee on 10th March 2011 and had

outlined the potential impact of the proposals on staff, explaining that frontline staff would not be affected.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he had read the Libraries Working Party report and recommendations. The proposals for 'shared services' were being taken forward and the Portfolio Holder stated that he felt this was an exciting development and as such he supported the recommendations. The Portfolio Holder stressed that he did not want to see libraries close but noted that the Council had to make savings within the service. The Committee were assured that the Portfolio Holder would do everything within his power to support the continuation of children's groups and that he would work closely with Officers to develop innovative ways of delivering library services.

The Vice-Chairman proposed additional recommendations for the Portfolio Holder to consider:

1. That Officers be asked to consider increasing the savings resulting from the merger;
2. That the Trust Option be presented to the Committee;
3. That a report outlining clear recommendations be presented to the Committee's next meeting in July 2011;
4. That the date of the next meeting be added to recommendation 2.3.

Following a vote, the Committee supported the recommendations, with Councillor John Getgood voting against the recommendations.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

- 1. Note the position on 'Shared Services and in particular the benefits, including the levels of potential savings that have been identified;**
- 2. Agree that the Director of Renewal and Recreation continues with the detailed negotiations with the London Borough of Bexley and that a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Renewal and Recreation PDS in July 2011 outlining the available options and the outcome of negotiations and staff consultation.**

66.c FEES AND CHARGES FOR CULTURE 2011/12
Report DRR11/009

The fees and charges levied for services in the Culture Division needed to be assessed at the start of the financial year. Particular attention should be given to the charges in light of the economic climate as any improvement in the level of income generated could offset reductions elsewhere in the service delivery.

The Head of Library, Archive and Museum Services introduced the report and highlighted that there had been a fundamental shift in the logic behind the charges imposed. In terms of fees for items from out-of-borough, the service

had been heavily subsidised and the proposed charges represented cost recovery. A low, competitive price was being charged for events and activities and this reflected an increased service. The proposed charges for hall hire were to be brought in line with similar halls across the Borough.

Increased Charges for Reservations

A Member sought clarification as to which books would fall into the £12.60 fee. The Head of Library, Archive and Museum Services reported that this was the specialist reservation charge levied by the British Library and other library services. If books from other London Boroughs could be accessed, the charge for specialist reservations could be limited.

Councillor John Getgood reported that the introduction of charges would place increased pressure on small libraries and would encourage library users to drive to larger libraries to access a wider choice.

Increased Charges for Performance Sets

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Library, Archive and Museum Services reported that it was more complex to obtain sets from other Boroughs and the increased charges were proposed to cover the cost to the Local Authority.

Media Charging

A Member highlighted that the costs to the Borough of this service was increasing whilst demand from residents was decreasing. The Head of Library, Archive and Museum Services acknowledged that the market was changing, but highlighted that the service provided an income to the Local Authority and was appreciated by those who used the service. Issue of media stocks remained high, but it was important for Officers to monitor the changing market.

The Portfolio Holder questioned whether media charging included books for the visually impaired. The Head of Library, Archive and Museum confirmed that audio books were included and clarified that there was a concessionary rate for people with a registered visual impairment.

Charging for Events and Activities

A Member underlined the importance of encouraging people to read and expressed concern surrounding charges for reading groups. The Member also expressed concern around the change to the relationship between staff and customers following the introduction of a charge. Currently staff members were there to provide assistance with reading groups; once a charge was imposed customers may have higher expectations of the services they are paying for.

Another Member expressed concern surrounding the security issues of having honesty boxes on counters as counters were not constantly manned. The Head of Library, Archive and Museum Services reported that boxes could be locked to counters and were considered to be safe.

Charging for Talks

A Member suggested that academy schools should be charged to access these services, but was concerned regarding the impact of any charges on smaller schools that had less funding. The Member suggested that the wording of paragraph 3.12 should be amended to read “...charges should be introduced for the visits to academy and independent schools...”

Another Member suggested that the Local Authority should be encouraging a thirst for knowledge and that the services of museums should be in the Community. The Vice-Chairman suggested that it was not cost effective to invoice schools for such small amounts and that the services might as well be free.

Hall Hire

A Member expressed concern surrounding the charges for Central Library exhibition area as this had proved an effective way exhibiting to the Community.

Another Member commented on the steep increase in weekend charges for training and interview rooms.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

- 1. Agree the proposed increases to some existing charges and to new charges as set out in the report, with the exception of charges for talks which were not supported by the Committee;**
- 2. Agree to the piloting and further investigation of some options;**
- 3. Note that all other charges are to rise by 4.5%.**

66.d CHRISTMAS LIGHTS POLICY 2011 Report DRR11/032

The Acting Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support introduced a report which provided an update on the results of a review of Christmas Lights undertaken by the Town Centre Management and Business Support section and set out options for Members to consider for the Council's approach in 2011.

The Acting Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support corrected a number of minor errors in the report:

- Paragraph 2.2 – there were four options set out in the report, not three as stated.
- Paragraph 2.3 – should be deleted.
- Paragraph 3.11 – there were four possible courses of action, not three as stated.
- Paragraph 3.11.2 – the final sentence should be removed.

A Member suggested that it was not unreasonable to ask business to pay for Christmas lights as they attracted customers into the Town Centres and were beneficial to local businesses. Another Member highlighted that the public enjoyed the light displays and it would be a shame to lose them but the full cost should not fall to the Council.

Another Member commented that it was odd that there had been lower offers from the retailers in larger town centres. It was also suggested that retailers who failed to contribute to the light displays should be “named and shamed”.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that in the current economic climate the public would not expect lavish Christmas light displays and expressed support for publicising the contributions that were made by local businesses. The Committee were reminded that the London Borough of Bexley had previously withdrawn funding for Christmas lights which had resulted in increased contributions from businesses had increased.

The Chairman clarified that it appeared that Option 3 was the preferred option of the Committee.

The Portfolio Holder reported that he had originally considered Option 1 but that he was happy to support Option 3. The Portfolio Holder explained that due to extreme weather conditions in recent years which had impacted on Christmas events, the decision had been taken cancel planned events in 2011 and make alternate arrangements. Confirmation was sought from Officers that funding from businesses could be established in time to order the lights. The Acting Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support confirmed that there was sufficient time to establish funding.

A Member also asked that in future businesses should be asked to increase their contributions to the Christmas lights.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

- 1. Agree Option 3 as set out in paragraph 3.11.4;**
- 2. Agree the proposed policy for donations to smaller town Christmas lights schemes as outlined in the report.**

**67 BROMLEY ADULT EDUCATION COLLEGE - ANNUAL REPORT
2010/11
Report DRR11/034**

The Committee considered the Annual Report from Bromley Adult Education College. The Principal and Chairman of Governors of Bromley Adult Education College introduced the report and highlighted the successes achieved by the College through the 2009/10 academic year. The Principal highlighted the high levels of student satisfaction reflected in the report.

The Chairman of Governors reported that increasing numbers of tutorial staff had gained professional teaching qualifications over the year and this was reflected in the improvements made by the college.

A Member asked about the role of the Health and Safety Committee and whether it was a condition of funding. The Principal responded that the college was required to keep records of incidents and accidents and that the Committee was a condition of funding. The Committee met five times a year and undertook risk assessments and was a practical body rather than a bureaucratic body.

Another Member asked whether the fees for the nursery were competitive with the private sector. The Principal of the College responded that the fees were competitive but that provision differed from the private sector as it was only available for 38 weeks a year. The nursery provision was doing well and usage varied over the different sites. At the Kentwood Site around 45% of the usage was by staff and students, at the Widmore site 25% was by staff and students and at the Poverest site approximately 30% was by staff and students.

The Chairman thanked the Governors and the staff for their hard work over the past year and the Committee commended the report.

RESOLVED that the achievement of Bromley Adult Education College over the past year be noted.

**68 BROMLEY NORTH VILLAGE MEMBER WORKING PARTY
REPORT
Report DRR11/030**

At the meeting of the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee on 29th June 2010, Members agreed to establish a Working Group to work with stakeholders to develop key elements of the Bromley North Village Improvement Plan and requested that the findings from the Working Group be reported back to a future meeting of the PDS Committee. The Committee considered a report summarising the progress that had been made on the key elements of the improvement plan.

The Vice-Chairman reported that he had attended the presentation by the designers. It had been very interesting to hear their ideas on making Bromley North a distinctive area. The Vice-Chairman suggested the initiative should be commended by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The work of the Working Group on progressing Community Safety and Branding and Wayfinding issues be noted;**
- 2. The future Member overview provisions for the development of the wider improvement plan and Bromley North Village Public Realm Project be noted.**

69 BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP MINUTES 2 FEBRUARY 2011

The Committee noted the minutes from the meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership held on 2nd February 2011.

70 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the PDS Committee for 2010/2011. A Member suggested that in future years it would make more sense for the report to be presented to the Committee prior to the Full Council meeting in order to allow the comments of the Committee to be reflected.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**71 RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS WORK PROGRAMME
Report LDCS11061**

The Committee considered its Work Programme for the forthcoming year, including reference to Working Groups commissioned by the Committee.

The Chairman highlighted that some reports had been considered by the Executive without being scrutinised by the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee. Whilst the Committee accepted that the reports had been scrutinised by the Executive and Resources PDS Committee, Members felt that it was important that specialist issues were considered by the specialist Committee. The Director of Renewal and Recreation reported that the Bromley Mytime contract would be considered in 2 months and it was agreed that if there was no appropriate meeting in the work programme, a special meeting would be held.

It was agreed that two additional items would be added to the work programme:

- Bromley Mytime contract;
- Scrutiny of the Renewal and Recreation Budget.

RESOLVED that the Committee's Work Programme be agreed subject to the inclusion of the issues outlined above.

The Meeting ended at 9.57 pm

Chairman