

**EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 25 January 2012

Present:

Councillors Douglas Auld, Julian Benington,
Nicholas Bennett J.P., Ruth Bennett, Judi Ellis,
Peter Fookes, Will Harmer, William Huntington-Thresher,
Russell Jackson (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Russell Mellor,
Nick Milner, Tom Papworth, Sarah Phillips and
Stephen Wells

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur, Councillor Stephen Carr and
Councillor Robert Evans

**115 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF
ALTERNATE MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eric Bosshard – in his absence the Vice-Chairman took the chair. Councillors Judi Ellis, Tom Papworth and Stephen Wells sent apologies for arriving late.

116 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peter Fookes declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 6 (Corporate Contracts Register) as Treasurer of Penge and Anerley Age Concern.

**117 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE
PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

No questions had been received.

**118 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES PDS
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER 2011
(EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

119 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS
Report RES 12007

The Committee considered matters arising from previous meetings and noted the following matters.

- **Section 106 Agreements:** The Resources Portfolio Holder was meeting with senior officers to consider the use of section 106 balances, and the outcome would be reflected in future capital programme monitoring and revenue services monitoring reports.
- **Total Place Pilots:** The Finance Director reported that the Government had now set up four Whole Place Community Budget Pilots and ten Neighbourhood led Pilots to trial this approach before it was introduced nationwide for 2013/14. It was agreed that a briefing paper would be provided for Members of this Committee.
- **SEN:** Councillor Stephen Wells updated the Committee on the project to provide a local special school for autistic children.

RESOLVED that progress on matters arising be noted.

120 CORPORATE CONTRACTS REGISTER

The Committee received the latest version of the Corporate Contracts Register. Following discussions with the Chairman, this had a new layout that made Contracts Beyond Alert Date Part A and the Main Register Part B. Members noted that, to improve the accuracy and presentation of the Register, it would be issued quarterly in future, and that departments were now required to submit their departmental registers to the relevant PDS Committee prior to the Corporate Register being considered at Executive and Resources PDS Committee.

The Committee discussed the following contracts –

- **Bus Route Design:** Members requested a report for the next meeting on expenditure under this contract since the end of the London Bus Priority Network.
- **Library Cleaning Services/Office Cleaning:** Members requested that officers try to ensure that local companies could participate in these contracts, particularly for library cleaning.
- **Library Book Supply:** It was confirmed that, although officers were working on a joint approach with Bexley, schools were not currently included.
- **Banking Services:** It was confirmed that any contract extension would be on the existing terms of the contract.

The Committee was informed that roughly one third of expenditure on contracts went to local companies.

The Director of Resources advised that the Contracts Register would be circulated earlier in future, and asked Members to alert officers via Democratic Services of any issues that they wanted to raise so that more detailed answers could be given at the meeting.

121 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions which had been published on 17th January 2012.

122 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

123 RESOURCES PORTFOLIO - PREVIOUS DECISIONS

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

124 REVENUE SERVICES MONITORING REPORT
Report RES1115

The Committee received a report monitoring performance of the Revenues services provided by Liberata up to 30th November 2011. The report included a letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's Contract Director, providing an update on each service and statistical data, and representatives from Liberata attended the meeting. Council tax collection was slightly above the previous year, and Bromley was second amongst the twenty London authorities who had responded to a request for benchmarking data. Arrears collection was also improved. As at the end of November, business rate collection was slightly down on the previous year but it was the best reported in London and by the middle of January was above last year.

The Committee was informed that a targeted exercise was being undertaken to check on Single Person Discounts. This had identified 1,000 properties where it was possible that a second person was resident, and further 3,000 properties where data did not match properly. Liberata were also working to reduce the number of properties listed as long term empty – the number had reduced by 82 compared to last year resulting in additional funding through the Government's New Homes Bonus scheme.

Liberata reported on their initiative to reduce sundry debts, particularly in relation to utility companies. This depended on working closely with Council departments. Regular meetings had been held with the highest debtor, Thames Water, resulting in agreements about speeding up dispute resolution, while other companies were responding to late payment interest invoices.

RESOLVED that the information in the report and the letter from Liberata be noted.

**125 HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS SERVICE
MONITORING REPORT**
Report RES11154

The Committee received a report detailing the levels of performance provided by the Liberata Benefits Service during the period 1st April to 30th November 2011. Liberata was on-target for the year, with the only area of slight under performance being overpayment recovery. This was expected to improve in the final months of the year.

Members commented that although the error rate was going down, the number of complaints was rising. This was probably because the rules were becoming stricter, leading to more dissatisfaction amongst claimants. Officers agreed that more information distinguishing justified and unjustified complaints could be provided in future reports.

In response to questions from Members, it was reported that moving the reception area to the Civic Centre would also involve all Liberata staff transferring, and that an e-billing package had been purchased which would be rolled-out for 2013/14.

RESOLVED that the current levels of performance be noted.

126 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - PERFORMANCE Q3 2011/12
Report RES12014

The Committee received a report summarising treasury management activity during the quarter ended 31st December 2011. The report also updated Members on the Council's investment with Heritable Bank – the latest estimate from the Administrators was that the Council would receive a likely return of between 86% and 90% on its claim.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

127 RESOURCES PORTFOLIO - PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the following reports for pre-decision scrutiny on matters where the Resources Portfolio Holder was minded to make decisions.

**127.1 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - ANNUAL INVESTMENT
STRATEGY 2012/13**
Report RES12021

The Committee examined the proposed Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2012/13 to 2014/15, which the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services required to be

approved by full Council, along with the prudential indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement.

A number of UK banks had recently been subject to credit ratings downgrades, restricting the Council's lending options. Following consultation with Sector Treasury Services, the Council's advisors, ratings criteria had been reviewed and revised eligibility bands were proposed to give the Council more options and flexibility.

Members questioned whether money should be invested in Santander Bank plc, given the bank's Spanish ownership, but it was explained that Santander UK was a separate UK subsidiary, with UK assets.

The Committee supported the recommendations.

**128 OUTSOURCING OF CENTRAL INCOME TEAM AND HOUSING
 ACCOMMODATION CHARGES TEAM**
 Report RES12020

As part of the 2012/13 budget process all areas of expenditure had been scrutinised and the option of outsourcing had been considered where appropriate. It was proposed to transfer the Central Income Team and the Housing Accommodation Charges Team from the Council's Exchequer Team to Liberata. Transferring these small teams would have financial and service benefits, reducing duplication and providing resilience.

The Committee supported the proposals.

129 ISARD HOUSE, GLEBE HOUSE DRIVE, HAYES
 Report DRR12/006

The Committee was informed that this former care home had become vacant in March 2011. Following a feasibility study, the Children and Young People Services Department had now concluded that the site was not suitable for its proposed new facility for children with autistic spectrum disorders, and the Portfolio Holder was being recommended to declare the property surplus to Council requirements and authorise its advertisement for sale on the open market.

The Committee supported the proposal to declare Isard House surplus to requirements and to authorise its advertisement for sale.

**130 HOLDING THE RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO
 ACCOUNT**

The Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Graham Arthur, attended the meeting and updated the Committee on his work. He focussed on the financial challenges facing the Council, and the largest budget reductions that the Council had ever known. He felt that the Council was taking difficult decisions now that were important for mid-term prospects.

He was looking for further opportunities to make savings through invest to save schemes and shared services, and a further shared services conference was planned for the Spring. The Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee and the Organisational Improvement programme were driving greater efficiency and the Council's reserves were being used more effectively. The capital programme had been reduced by taking out schemes that were unlikely to proceed, and he was monitoring post-completion reviews. He was working closely with officers and with Liberata on detailed finance issues such as invoicing and inter-departmental debts.

On public health, he reported that Bromley was acknowledged as a leading authority in London, doing a better job for less money than the NHS had done in the past, and the Health and Wellbeing Board had now dropped its "Shadow" prefix.

He concluded by urging PDS Committees to evaluate the measures being taken to reduce the budget and suggest further savings for 2014/15 and beyond.

Questioned by Members he stated that he was in favour of a move to Councillors using computer "tablets" for committee papers to save printing and distribution costs after the next election, but he had asked for a programme of improvements to the Council Chamber to be re-considered as the cost was excessive. Other Members mentioned key issues that could impact on the Council's finances such as retention of business rates, Council tax benefit localisation and Local Authority Central Services Education Grant (LACSEG.)

Members discussed whether it would be possible to inform Bromley Council tax payers in simple terms about the cost of individual services and facilities at the point of service. The Portfolio Holder agreed that the Council should look at how it informed residents about the costs of services on a case by case basis.

131 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS
Report RES12008

The Committee considered reports on the agenda for the Executive's meeting on 1st February 2012.

(5) Proposals for the Biggin Hill Heritage Centre
Report DRR12/007

The report advised the Executive to endorse the site adjacent to the Memorial Chapel as the most appropriate site for the Heritage Centre and recommended the release of a further £64k of section 106 funds to the Biggin Hill Battle of Britain Trust to allow work on developing the Business Plan and Capital Cost Plan to progress.

The Committee supported the recommendations.

(6) Budget Monitoring 2011/12

Report RES12010

The Committee noted the Budget Monitoring report based on expenditure and activity levels as at the end of November 2011.

(7) 2012/13 Council Tax

Report RES11157

The Committee noted the final issues affecting the 2012/13 budget and the recommendations to Council on the level of the Bromley element of the 2012/13 Council Tax.

The Committee supported the recommendations.

(8) Capital Programme Monitoring Q3 2011/12 and Annual Capital Review 2012 to 2016

Report RES12019

The Committee noted the current position on capital expenditure and receipts including the deletion of £3,156k from the programme.

The Committee supported the recommendations.

(9) Gateway Review 0, 1 and 2: Approval of 2012/13 Operational Building Maintenance Budgets, Planned Maintenance Programmes and Preferred Procurement Option

Report DRR12/009

(10) Gateway Review 0, 1 and 2: Approval of 2012/13 CYP Building Maintenance Budgets, CYP Planned Maintenance Programme and Preferred Procurement Option

Report DRR12/010

The Committee noted the draft Operational and Schools planned maintenance budgets for 2012/13, which focussed on only the very highest priority schemes.

The Committee noted the proposed reductions and savings and supported the recommendations.

132 LOCALISM ACT 2011

Report RES12018

The Committee received a report summarising the key provisions of the Localism Act 2011. The Director of Resources confirmed that the Act allowed local authorities to revert to a committee system of governance; the opportunity to do this was three days after the annual meeting, rather than only after elections as originally proposed in the Bill.

The Committee considered the Community Right to Bid and also the Community Right to Challenge. The Director confirmed that the Right to Bid related to assets of community value, whether publicly or privately owned, and the Council would have to establish a register of these assets, but detailed guidance and regulations were awaited.

The Constitution Improvement Working Group had been re-convened to make recommendations on matters arising from the Act to the special Council meeting on 26th March.

RESOLVED that the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 be noted.

133 UPDATES FROM PDS CHAIRMEN

PDS Committee Chairmen reported on the work of their Committees as follows –

Adult and Community PDS Committee: Councillor Judi Ellis reported that her Committee was to meet the next day.

Children and Young People PDS Committee: Councillor Stephen Wells reported that his Committee had discussed the 2012/13 budget in some detail at their meeting the previous night. There were considerable pressures both for the next year and beyond that in demand for SEN and SEN transport provision, with a rise in more complex needs. The SEN Working Group was looking at an invest to save project to provide specialist facilities for autistic children within the borough, and they had asked for a report with financial details for their next meeting. The future of education funding was still unknown, and the Committee had requested a report for their next meeting on sold services to academies.

There were a number of other important issues being considered. The Primary School Development Plan Working Group had met on 5th January 2012 to consider the pressure on school places in the north of the borough. He also reported that Ofsted were due to inspect the Children and Young People Services Department in March, and Members inquired about progress in merging the department with Adult and Community Services. The Leader reported that progress would be made over the next few months, and the Panel for the recruitment of the new Director had just met and confirmed the schedule for the appointment.

Asked about the slow progress with on-line admissions and free school meals applications, which the New Technology Working Group's report had highlighted, Councillor Wells confirmed that he had asked officers for a report.

Councillor Judi Ellis highlighted work being carried out by officers on different funding streams to secure grants relating to broken families and back to work funding. She considered that Members needed to retain an oversight of these

programmes where there was likely to be considerable overlap in the people targeted.

Environment PDS Committee: Councillor William Huntington-Thresher reported that his Committee had received a presentation on major public transport improvements for the borough.

Recreation and Renewal PDS Committee: Councillor Sarah Phillips reported that her Committee was meeting the next day to consider the 2012/13 budget. The Committee was also monitoring developments with Bromley Adult Education College, the Bromley Mytime contract and Outer London Fund bids for town centre improvements. Bids had been successful for Bromley and Orpington, but not for Beckenham, and the Committee had re-convened the Working Group to look at options for Beckenham town centre.

Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee: Councillor Douglas Auld reported on his Committee's recent activity. The Committee had met the new Police Borough Commander, Stephanie Roberts, and had visited Bromley Fire Station, establishing that the Fire Service had reorganised its management structure so that senior officers focused on managing functions rather than particular crews and stations. A visit to the new Drug Treatment Unit was planned for 22nd February.

The Committee was also monitoring a number of other issues and initiatives, including the Mentoring Scheme, the Best Bar None scheme, the proposed new CCTV contracts which provided substantial savings to the Council, the control of stray dogs, funding for Bromley Council for Voluntary Youth Services and the 2012/13 budget.

134 WORK PROGRAMME 2012
Report RES12009

The Committee considered its work programme, including scheduled meetings and the progress of PDS working groups. It was noted that Councillor Richard Scoates had been appointed chairman of the Big Society Working Group.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

**135 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION)
(VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION ACT 2000**

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business listed below as it was likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

136 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER 2011

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2012 were confirmed.

137 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORTS

The Committee scrutinised proposed decisions of the Resources Portfolio Holder relating to the following matters -

137.1 BROMLEY VALLEY GYMNASIUM CENTRE, CHIPPERFIELD ROAD, ST PAUL'S CRAY - RENT REVIEW
Report DRR11/150

The Committee supported proposals for the rent review for this property.

137.2 RENEWAL OF PROPERTY INSURANCE CONTRACT
Report RES12029

The Committee supported proposals for renewing the Council's property insurance contract.

138 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered and commented on part 2 reports on the Executive's agenda for the meeting on 1st February 2012 as follows.

(13) Re-Tendering of Contracts for

- (i) Maintenance of the Council's CCTV System, and**
 - (ii) Staffing and Monitoring of the CTV Control Room**
- Report ES12025

The Committee supported recommendations concerning the award of contracts for the maintenance and staffing of the CCTV control room.

(14) Residential Intermediate Care Services – Contract Extension
Report ACS12004

The Committee supported a recommendation to extend the existing contract with Mission Care for the provision of Intermediate Care.

(15) Diamond Jubilee Celebrations 2012
Report DRR12/003

The Committee supported proposed expenditure relating to celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

(16) Queen's Gardens, Bromley – Proposed Restaurant Development
Report DRR12/008

The Committee supported the Council's disposal of land and participation in the proposed restaurant development.

(17) Capital Receipts
Report RES12019

The Committee noted anticipated capital receipts.

The Meeting ended at 9.52 pm

Chairman