

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 3 January 2013

Present:

Councillor Eric Bosshard (Chairman)
Councillor Russell Mellor (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Douglas Auld, Nicholas Bennett J.P.,
Ruth Bennett, Judi Ellis, Will Harmer, Brian Humphrys, ,
Ernest Noad, Sarah Phillips, John Getgood,
Tom Papworth and Samaris Huntington-Thresher

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur, Councillor Stephen Carr,
Councillor Robert Evans, Councillor Peter Fortune and
Councillor Richard Scoates

**275 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF
SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor William Huntington-Thresher, who was replaced by Councillor Samaris Huntington-Thresher, and from Councillors Ellie Harmer and Nick Milner.

276 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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

No questions had been received.

**278 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES PDS
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2012
(EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2012 (excluding exempt information) be confirmed.

279 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS
Report RES13002

The Committee received an update on matters arising from previous meetings and noted that there would be an update on the New Technology Working Group at the next meeting.

280 FORWARD PLAN OF PRIVATE AND KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee received the latest version of the Forward Plan of Private and Key Decisions and noted that a number of decisions due to be taken by the Executive on 9th January or by the Resources Portfolio Holder following this meeting had been deferred to the next round of meetings.

281 CONTRACTS REGISTER

The Committee received schedules setting out (A) the latest Contracts Register for the Resources Portfolio (giving contracts worth over £50k), and (B) the Corporate Contracts Register (giving contracts worth over £200k). The schedules reflected a snapshot of contracts several weeks before the meeting and in some cases original contract values established several years previously. The Committee raised concerns about the following matters –

- There were a number of construction/maintenance contracts where the original estimate had been too low, and costs had subsequently increased. Members were concerned that the right level of expertise should be available to plan these projects more accurately. Members sought further details about the Red Hill School Windows contract (contract 047411).
- The cost of mobile phone services was queried. It was confirmed that there was a central contract and that the Council had achieved a good deal.
- Contract values were increased in line with RPIX, which had produced some fairly large increases. It was explained that in recent years there had been a policy of freezing increases in the early years of longer contracts.

The Committee also asked about the costs of the Council's membership of London Councils and comments were made that the organisation had established a large bureaucracy which needlessly mirrored the structure of the boroughs. It was clarified that part of the annual cost was the Council's contribution to the London Boroughs Grants Committee and that although there was no statutory duty to be part of the organisation it was used to implement London-wide legislation and programmes and there was therefore a definite benefit for the Council in being involved. A Member commented that London Councils events were often very useful and informative, and the Council should perhaps take greater advantage of these opportunities. The Committee requested a report on London Councils for a future meeting.

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

No questions had been received.

283 RESOURCES PORTFOLIO: PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the following report for pre-decision scrutiny where the Resources Portfolio Holder was minded to take a decision.

283.1 Land at the rear of 4 Wirral Wood Close, Chislehurst
Report RES13001

Authority was sought for the disposal of a small parcel of land that was formerly part of Chislehurst Recreation Ground. The sale of the land would achieve a capital receipt without any detriment to the Recreation Ground, and it was noted that there had been no further reports of anti-social behaviour since the land had been enclosed. Members requested further details of the proposed covenant that, if the building at 4 Wirral Wood Close was extended to the north, would entitle the Council to a share of the increase in value of the land should it be determined that without it the extension would not have been possible.

RESOLVED that the recommendation be supported.

284 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 9th January 2013.

(5) Council Tax Support/Reduction
Report RES13011

Following a public consultation exercise approval was sought for a draft Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme to be forwarded to full Council on 21st January 2013 for adoption. Early printed versions of the report contained a minor error at page 6, where the Council Tax liability percentage should have been 19%, rather than 21%. The report presented two options for consideration – option 1 was for working age claimants to contribute a minimum 19% towards their Council Tax liability, but with transitional protection applied in 2013/14 to limit the minimum contribution to 8.5%, while option 2 was to apply the 19% minimum in 2013/14 without the transitional protection.

It was confirmed that the technical changes to Council Tax approved at the Executive's last meeting were not directly linked to the proposals for Council Tax Support.

Members suggested that the proposed £16k capital savings threshold should be reviewed after a year.

Councillor Tom Papworth requested that details of the numbers of claimants in properties above band D should be circulated to Members. He also expressed concern at the increased difficulty in collecting payments and the costs involved in pursuing those in default. Officers confirmed that the real position on collection rates would only be fully known after two years, but in-year collection rates would be closely monitored. Provision was made in the draft budget to allow for this uncertainty. Councillor Nicholas Bennett suggested a joint approach by the South East London Boroughs to the South East London Bench to encourage a consistent approach to the award of costs. Councillor Judi Ellis suggested that an approach based on breach of social housing tenancies might be more successful than pursuing the debts in the normal way.

RESOLVED that the Committee supports the adoption of option1 using transitional relief.

(6) Draft 2013/14 Budget Update
Report RES13015

The report sought approval for the initial draft 2013/14 budget including actions proposed to reduce the Council's medium term budget gap. The report also included savings to be considered by the Executive in addition to the indicative savings previously identified in February 2012. The report included, at appendix 5, a summary of the real changes forecast for the next few years. It was intended that all PDS Committees would scrutinise the proposals and report back to the E&R PDS Committee by 31st January, before a final recommendation was made to full Council on 2013/14 Council tax levels by the Executive at their following meeting on 6th February 2013. The grant settlement had been later than usual, with more variables to assess; there were still some areas of uncertainty remaining, such as LACSEG, and these would if possible be reported to the meeting on 6th February.

Members commented that it was important to implement the savings required as quickly as possible and to begin to generate income from the Property Investment Fund. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation was looking at ways to accelerate the disposal of surplus Council property, and Members sought a report back on this in due course. A Member asked whether the Council could economise on grass cutting by expecting householders to cut and maintain the verges outside their homes, as in North America. It was confirmed that although the law did not specify a standard to which verges should be maintained, or a frequency of cutting, the Council could not pass on its statutory responsibilities. Councillor Judi Ellis commented that in her ward of Cray Valley West there were numerous green areas on the estates which residents would like to be converted for parking. She felt that residents should be allowed to decide whether this should be done; where it was this could allow savings to be made on grass cutting. The Leader commented that following the Active

Citizens PDS report further investigations were being carried out into stimulating local volunteering.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

(7) The Winter Health Project

Report CEO1212

The Council had made a successful bid to the Department of Health (DoH) for funding from their Warm Homes Healthy People Fund to identify, assist and support vulnerable groups of people at risk of ill health in the winter months to March 2013. The Executive was being asked to approve the draw down of the DoH funding, which amounted to £74,817.

The Committee raised a number of queries about the project –

- There was concern that existing agencies and arrangements were in place to tackle these issues already – the money should be used to enhance existing services rather than into additional structures. It was confirmed that the project would be managed through Public Health but delivered in conjunction with a number of Council departments and local partners including Bromley Healthcare, Community Links Bromley and Age UK.
- Too much of the money was going to be diverted into paying for bureaucracy and a project manager rather than frontline services. It was suggested that an existing partner, such as Age UK, could manage the project. Bidding for the funds available had been higher than expected, so the Council had not obtained the full £92k that it had bid for, but the money would be prioritised towards the frontline rather than support costs and the Assistant Director of Public Health would spend more of her time overseeing the project.
- The criteria for evaluating the success of the project were unclear. It would take up to two years for statistics on winter deaths to be fully evaluated, but the project would be closely monitored and overseen by the Staying Healthy Partnership Board and there would be process measures to monitor progress.
- A campaign of raising awareness amongst health professionals should not be needed. The focus would be on ensuring that professionals were aware of the work of partners and pathways for referrals.
- A report should have been made to Members at an earlier stage; however, the outcome of the bid had only been announced by the Department of Health in December.

Despite some scepticism about the value of this expenditure the Committee accepted that the funding was available to use and supported the proposals.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

(8) Bromley North Village – Public Realm Improvements
Report DRR13/012

The Executive was asked to endorse the overall design of the Bromley North Village Public Realm Improvements and to release the Council's match funding contribution, subject to the Transport for London (TfL) approval being secured on 14th January 2013. Subject to this confirmation and the written agreement from Design for London that the Outer London Fund contribution can be paid on the raising of orders, it was proposed to purchase materials in order for these to be charged to the 2012/13 Outer London funding allocation, which may be at risk if not defrayed before the end of March 2013.

Councillor Sarah Phillips confirmed that the scheme had been considered on several occasions by Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee, and members were generally in support of the proposals. Councillor John Getgood commented that the groups seeking to use the Bell for a community arts venue should be supported - discussions were still going on with interested parties. Councillor Getgood also raised concerns about moving bus stops from Market Square to other locations where there might be less space, but it was accepted that some rationalisation was needed.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

(9) Reducing Temporary Accommodation Invest to Save Project (Bellegrove)
Report CS12058

It was proposed to use Bellegrove, a former residential home, as temporary accommodation to enable the Council to meet its statutory housing duties and to assist towards reducing the significant cost incurred by the Council as a result of increased use of nightly paid accommodation. The Executive was asked to support an invest to save bid to fund the refurbishment and to approve the use of Orchard and Shipman to oversee the planning and refurbishment process and then to lease and manage the property. Councillor Judi Ellis, whose ward the property was in, commented that this was a good location for this temporary accommodation.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

285 UPDATES FROM PDS CHAIRMEN
Report RES13013

The Committee received updates from Councillor Douglas Auld as Chairman of the Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee following the Committee's meeting on 27th November 2012, Councillor Judi Ellis as Chairman of Care Services PDS Committee following the Committee's meeting on 4th December 2012 and from Councillor William Huntington-Thresher as Chairman of the

Environment PDS Committee following the Committee's meeting on 20th November 2012.

The Chairman urged all PDS Chairmen to ensure that their updates were submitted in good time before the Executive and Resources PDS Committee meeting.

286 WORK PROGRAMME
Report RES13004

The Committee received an update on its work programme and on the progress of PDS working groups.

287 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 referred to below as it is 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.

**The following summaries
refer to matters
involving exempt information**

288 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2012

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2012 were confirmed.

289 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORTS

The Committee scrutinised the following proposed decision of the Resources Portfolio Holder.

289.1 Whitehall Recreation Ground Lodge, Cowper Road, Bromley

The Committee considered the offers received for the purchase of this site and supported the recommendation to accept the best consideration reasonably obtainable.

