

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 7 January 2015

Present:

Councillor Eric Bosshard (Chairman)
Councillor Will Harmer (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Douglas Auld, Nicholas Bennett J.P.,
Ian Dunn, Ellie Harmer, Samaris Huntington-Thresher,
William Huntington-Thresher, David Livett, Kate Lymer,
Russell Mellor, Keith Onslow, Ian F. Payne,
Pauline Tunnicliffe and Angela Wilkins

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur, Councillor Stephen Carr and
Councillor Robert Evans

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

Councillor Douglas Auld replaced Councillor Tony Owen and Councillor Ian Dunn replaced Councillor Peter Fookes. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Russell Mellor and Samaris Huntington-Thresher.

86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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

No questions had been received.

**88 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES PDS
 COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2014
 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2014 (excluding exempt information) be confirmed.

89 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS
Report CSD15001

The Committee received a summary of matters arising from previous meetings.

90 FORWARD PLAN OF PRIVATE AND KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key and Private Executive decisions as published on 16th December 2014.

91 CONTRACTS REGISTER

The Committee received the Contracts Register for (a) Resources Portfolio contracts over £50k and (b) contracts across all departments with a value in excess of £200k. A Member asked about the Adecco contract for agency worker provision; it was confirmed that all costs under this contract were recharged to departmental budgets.

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

No questions had been received.

93 SCRUTINY OF THE RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor Graham Arthur, attended the meeting to give an update on his work and answer questions from the Committee. He began by commenting on the new arrangements for individual voter registration, where there had been some teething problems, and on postal votes, which were expected to rise to 25 - 30% for the coming general election.

The commissioning programme was now gathering pace, and all PDS Committees would be receiving reports on services. Although this was a time of uncertainty for many staff, some staff who had already transferred to contractors had reported that the move had been very positive. Although CIPFA had stated that about 40% of Councils would be unable to balance their budgets in two years, this would definitely not include Bromley. He felt that at the recent public meetings people had been more informed about the financial pressure on the Council and accepted the need for a measured Council Tax increase and for people to do more to help themselves, as long as there remained a safety net for those unable to help themselves.

The Council had separated capital and revenue spending and was debt-free. Reserves were used to increase expenditure to support frontline services – due to careful investment an additional £1.15m interest would be earned in the current year. Collection of Council Tax was exceeding the stretch target and fears that the new Council Tax support arrangements would reduce collection rates had not materialised. However there were new burdens such as the restrictions on parking enforcement which would result in lost income of about £1m. The Portfolio Holder urged all Councillors to lobby M.P.s on such issues. The Council seemed to be penalised for being efficient, but difficult decisions would not be avoided and the budget would be balanced.

The Chairman commented that it was important that the Council developed sources of income within its own control and invited Members to put questions to the Portfolio Holder. Responding to a question about how contractors were assessed and reviewed, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Council had been a contracting organisation for more than 20 years and a range of monitoring methods were used. However, he felt that it was important to base each contract on outcomes and for Members to monitor closely, listening to what their residents said about services. In particular he advised Members to visit the Customer Contact Centre and to take the opportunity to listen in on calls.

A Member asked whether, with the increasing proportion of postal votes, there was scope for savings from combining polling stations and reducing staff where there were two or more stations in the same building. Other than for local Council elections, costs were reimbursed by central government.

The Chairman commented that it was important to communicate with residents and explain the Council's actions. The Portfolio Holder stated that the development of the customer portal was a huge opportunity to develop dialogue with residents.

A Member asked whether there would be improvements to the Council's spam filtering systems. The Portfolio Holder agreed that the recent increase in spam was concerning, and officers confirmed that they were always endeavouring to keep the right balance between stopping spam and allowing legitimate messages to be delivered.

94 RESOURCES PORTFOLIO - PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

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

94.1 Land Adjacent To 24 Chesterfield Close, Orpington Report DRR14/114

It was proposed to dispose of a parcel of land adjacent to 24 Chesterfield Road, Orpington. The Chairman requested that comments from the ward Councillors be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the recommendation to declare the land adjacent to 24 Chesterfield Close, Orpington, surplus to Council requirements to enable its sale be supported.

94.2 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2ND QUARTER 2014/15 Report FSD14083

On 26th November 2014 the Executive had received the second quarterly monitoring report for 2014/15 and agreed a revised capital programme for the four year period 2014/15 to 2017/18.

RESOLVED that the proposal to note and confirm the changes to the Resources Capital Programme made by the Executive in November be supported.

95 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS
Report CSD15002

The Committee considered the following reports on the part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 14th January 2015.

(5) Draft 2015/16 Budget and Update on the Council's Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19
Report FSD15001

The report set out the initial draft budget for 2015/16 and indicated actions to reduce the Council's medium term "budget gap." The report set out potential savings to be considered by the Executive, but there were still outstanding issues and areas of uncertainty remaining. All PDS committees would be asked for their views before the Executive made its final recommendations to Council.

The Committee commented on a number of issues as follows –

- A Member commented that he found it unusual that the Council had three separate long term insurance policies expiring at different times, and that it would be better to approach insurers now and move towards a common renewal date, packaging these risks together.
- It was noted that the recent Working Group on the Effectiveness of Children's Centres had recommended 10% savings from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 budgets.
- It was noted that a strategic decision was being taken to charge Renewal Team and some Strategic Property costs to the Economic Development Fund and the Investment Fund respectively.
- A Member queried why the central contingency for the street cleansing contract could be reduced from £200k to £60k. It was explained that the context was that a saving of £1m had been made on the contract and a large contingency had been needed in case this saving could not be delivered; as no problems had been encountered it was possible to substantially reduce the provision.
- There was a £1m reduction in parking enforcement income; the Portfolio Holder had already been lobbying government on this issue.

The Chairman concluded that costs must continue to be contained.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

(6) Invest to Save
Report RES14078

At the September meeting of the Executive the Resources Portfolio Holder had asked for a report on the overall progress on Invest to Save schemes, including the amounts paid back so far. Many schemes had already repaid the amounts taken from the Invest to Save Fund, but there were also a few schemes where the anticipated savings had not yet been achieved, and this was having an impact on the projected budget overspend. Feedback on individual schemes had already been provided to the relevant PDS Committees and they were encouraged to focus on schemes where there was major under-achievement.

An additional table summarising the financial implications was tabled.

Councillor William Huntington-Thresher, as Chairman of the Environment PDS Committee, commented that the Green Garden Waste and Textile collection service was not intended as an invest to save project – rather, it was a service that had to cover its costs.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

(7) Gateway Review of Housing IT Systems
Report CS14106

The Council's contracts for Housing Systems software suppliers, currently held by Northgate and Home Connections, expired in March 2016. A gateway review of current and future system requirements had been carried out and the market had been surveyed to understand what alternative systems were available. It was proposed to procure a fully integrated Housing IT system from a framework developed by Crown Commercial Services.

An updated version of Appendix 2b was tabled which factored in reductions in the additional costs of upgrades and maintenance.

Members commented that the procurement exercise should be tightly controlled and that it was important to get the system specifications right from the start. It was also suggested that the Council should be buying a proven system.

RESOLVED that the recommendations be supported.

**96 SUNDRY DEBTORS AND ACCOUNTS PAYABLE SERVICE
MONITORING REPORT**
Report FSD14089

The report summarised information on the performance of the Sundry Debtors and Accounts Payable Services provided by Liberata up to 30th September 2014. A letter from Liberata's Contract Director was also considered, and representatives from Liberata attended the meeting to answer questions.

Members discussed utility debt, and in particular Thames Water debts, which formed a large proportion of the outstanding amounts. It was explained that Thames Water had disputed every invoice, but it was anticipated that the service department would have all issues resolved by the end of the financial year. Members also discussed the issue of debts that were written off – although this totalled £495k this was within the provision for bad debts – and outstanding debt for trade waste, which had reduced to £360k.

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

97 CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING REPORT
Report CSD14167

The report summarised information on the performance of the Customer Services contract provided by Liberata up to 30th November 2014. A letter from Liberata's Contract Director was also considered, and representatives from Liberata attended the meeting to answer questions.

A Member commented that there appeared to be no clear pattern on the success of channel shift; officers suggested that this would need to be judged over a longer period.

A Member asked whether the customer satisfaction surveys referred to in the report were conducted by an independent organisation. It was confirmed that the surveys were carried out by Liberata staff, but not those employed on the Bromley contract, and that Council officers approved the surveys. Liberata offered to send more detailed feedback to Members. The launch of the Web Portal would be key for this contract and further surveys would be carried out with early adopters.

A Member asked about the training issues mentioned in the letter from Liberata. Liberata had identified a skills gap when the Customer Service Centre had transferred to them and some key staff had been lost, but a programme of training had been put in place.

A Member asked about progress with the customer contact health check on School Admissions. Information was awaited from the service department, after which any proposals would go to the Commissioning Board. Progress would be reported in the next contract and budget monitoring reports.

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

98 WINTER HEALTH PROJECT

The Winter Health Project ran from December 2012 to March 2013 as part of the implementation of the Department of Health's Cold Weather Plan, following a successful bid to the Department's Warm Homes Healthy People

Fund for a one-off grant to address Excess Winter Deaths in Bromley in 2012/13. The Committee had previously considered the project in June 2013 and requested a further report after another year.

The objectives of the Project were to raise awareness of winter health issues and work with stakeholders. Partners included Age Concern and the Council's Home Improvement Team. The reasons for Bromley having higher than expected deaths in winter compared to London or England were complex. Members requested further information about the numbers of deaths and the context for this, but full data was still awaited from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Although the Project and the funding had ceased in 2013 officers were trying to ensure that the work became part of core business and a working group had been established to bring stakeholders together. Volunteer Health Champions had been trained and these would continue to be supported. Further work was needed with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to influence the contract with GPs and reach community pharmacists.

A more detailed report on the Excess Winter Deaths was available to Members.

RESOLVED that the progress made following the completion of the Winter Health project in April 2013 and the recommendations for 2015/16 be noted.

99 BROMLEY UNIT COST REPORT 2014/15
Report FSD14087

The Committee considered a report produced by LG Futures comparing unit costs for local authorities in England using budgeted expenditure from councils' revenue account returns for 2014/15. The report was intended to act as an initial guide for further investigation into areas where unit costs differed to those of similar authorities and where there might be scope for savings.

Members commented that although there was potential in the report, in practice there was not sufficient context or assurance that accurate comparisons were being made. It was accepted that the baseline reviews were a better starting point for reviewing services and budgets.

RESOLVED that the findings in the report be noted.

100 UPDATES FROM PDS CHAIRMEN
Report CSD15003

Updates were received from PDS Chairmen regarding the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee on 16th November 2014 and the Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee on 2nd December 2014.

**101 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15
 CSD15004**

The Committee reviewed its work programme. The Chairman requested a report on Invest to Save Projects and Contracts for the meeting on 12th March. It was noted that the Care Services PDS Budget Sub-Committee was currently on hold, and that Councillor Mellor should be added to the membership list for the New Technology Working Group.

**102 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**

**103 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th
 NOVEMBER 2014**

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2014 were confirmed.

**104 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE
 REPORTS**

The Committee scrutinised a report on the Executive's part 2 agenda for the meeting on 14th January 2015 concerning the Award of Contracts for Capital Schemes at Parish CE Primary School and St Paul's Cray CE Primary School.

105 COUNCILLOR WILL HARMER

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Will Harmer, was leaving the Committee as he had been appointed as Executive Assistant to the Leader. The Chairman thanked him for his service on the Committee.

The Meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Chairman

Executive & Resources PDS Committee: 7th January 2015 Updates from PDS Chairmen

Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee – 18th November 2014

Budget Monitoring 2014/15

Members considered the latest budget monitoring position for 2014/15 based on expenditure and activity levels up to 30 September 2014. The total portfolio budget showed a projected overspend of £69k.

Members also considered the level of expenditure and progress with the implementation of the selected projects within the Member Priority Initiatives.

Library service Strategy

A recent library review had resulted in the closure of the Mobile Library and the merger of Penge and Anerley Libraries. Bromley Libraries opening hours were also reduced from 605 to 527.5 per week.

Due to the continued financial constraints faced by the Council, it was necessary for consideration to be given to the most cost-effective and efficient way of managing the borough's library service going forward.

The report considered by Members outlined the strategy for taking the Library Service forward post completion of the baseline opening hours work stream. It also set out the detail behind the strategy which was underpinned by the development of community managed libraries and the exposure of the core library offer to the market for market testing.

It was confirmed that no libraries would close as a result of the review. The Chairman encouraged residents to e-mail comments to him and asked for their patience and forbearance whilst the review was being undertaken.

It was reported that the Council had invested in three new libraries to date. Both the new Orpington and Biggin Hill libraries had proved to be very successful and the recently established library at Penge had seen an improvement upon the former Penge and Anerley library.

It was confirmed that the standard length of time had been set aside to seek expressions of interest in community-run libraries for which a significant amount of publicity was anticipated. Marketing of library services was undertaken mainly on-line via social media such as Facebook and Twitter but were also publicised at social functions i.e. local festivals.

Review of Bromley Town Centre Markets

As requested by PDS Members in September 2014, a review of the current operation of the Bromley town centre market had been undertaken and proposals concerning its future development were submitted for consideration.

The report also requested the drawdown of some initial seed funding to assist with development, planning and design costs.

MyTime Active Annual Report 2013/14

In accordance with contractual arrangements between the Council and Mytime at the point of transfer of the services and the updated agreement dated 1 November 2011, Mytime submitted its Annual Report for 2013/14 for Member consideration.

The report outlined Mytime's achievements for the year and previewed its future spending proposals for 2015/16. In particular, Members were asked to consider the release of £330k from the Investment Fund to upgrade facilities at the Beckenham Spa.

Ms Mayne (CEO) explained that Mytime worked in a commercially sensitive environment. Profits were not distributed to shareholders but were carried forward to the following year for reinvestment purposes. Of the £31m income achieved last year, £29m was reinvested.

Mr Barkway explained that Mytime no longer operated joint facilities with schools, most of which had taken over sole responsibility. Mytime did, however, operate a before and after school club and also actively engaged with 59% of schools by offering swimming lessons.

Bromley Mytime had successfully engaged people in community activities with enthusiasm being shown once again this year for The London Youth Games.

Members considered an update on Town Centre Management and business support activities which had taken place since the previous update in September 2014.

The Chairman noted forthcoming events and commended the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support for producing a good report.

Town Centres Development Programme Update

Members considered the progress achieved in delivering the Town Centres Development Programme and the findings of the Growth Study and proposed programme of action.

Endorsement was sought for the development of project proposal bids for the Mayor's High Street Fund which required submission to the GLA by 1 December 2014.

The Chairman commended the Renewal Team for the Council's successful outcome of its four bids for New Homes Bonus funding

Planning Service – Progress with Customer Service and Planning Application Performance

In April 2013, the Development Control Committee endorsed a revised Outline Planning Improvement Plan as a framework for improvements to the Planning Service.

Members considered updates on improvements made to the Planning Division's telephone service to customers and on planning application performance.

The Chief Planner gave a presentation in relation to Customer Service Performance and reported the following:-

- A new telephone system had been installed and calls were now being dealt with efficiently.
- The volume of applications being dealt with had increased by 10%.
- 25% of the Development Control Team had been lost during June-September due to staff 'moving-on' or resigning. This however, was rectified by hiring six new members of staff who started in October-November.

More attention and improvement was needed in dealing with applications under delegated authority - 15% of applications were submitted to Committee and attempts were being made to reduce this level. The number of applications refused was 25% compared with the national average of 12%; this, however was due in part to the policy regime in Bromley, having to take into consideration Areas of Special Residential Character; Conservation Areas and the Green Belt area. Bromley's recent refusal rates were significantly higher than Bexley and Richmond Councils. Improvements across the board were also being sought in regard to appeal costs against the Council. It was stated that nearly 50% of applications were dismissed on appeal and was concerned about a lack of consistency between Inspectors as some appeals having been refused several times were then given approval at a later date. The Chief Planner confirmed that Inspectors do take into account previous appeal decisions where relevant to the latest proposal.

It was commented that many complaints concerning a lack of contact and information from planning staff and the length of time taken for case officers to be assigned to individual applications.

Comment was made to the objectives set out in the Outline Planning Improvement Plan and stated there was still a long way to go. Targets were not being met in regard to both major and minor applications, this was questioned. The Chief Planner referred to the reasons in the report and in recent months the staff turnover.

Members were informed that a higher than average proportion of applications were submitted to Committee however, this was not solely because the application contained more than 3 dwellings. Any application could be contentious (i.e. loss of light or amenity) and the Chief Planner had every confidence that Members were well-placed to identify such applications and 'call' them in.

Councillor Morgan was surprised to note the high rate of refusal of applications and asked that the reason for this be investigated.

The Chief Planner reported that 56% of applications had been dismissed and 44% allowed upon appeal. The national average allowed upon appeal was approximately 35%.

**Councillor Ian Payne,
Chairman, Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee**

Public Protection & Safety PDS Committee - 2nd December 2014

1. The third meeting of the Public Protection & Safety PDS Committee for the municipal year 2014/2015 was held on the 2nd December 2014.

2. The Police Update was provided by the Deputy Borough Commander, Superintendent Parm Sandhu. The statistical data relating to MOPAC 7 targets was positive. Overall crime was down, and theft and burglary crime figures had reduced. There was however an increase in the number of crimes with injury; non-domestic abuse was up by 23%, and domestic abuse had increased by 15%. It was noted that there had been a change in the way that offences against the person were being classified, partially explaining the increase.

The Committee was advised that Operation Equinox was currently ongoing. This was an operation to reduce the number of crimes involving injury, and was concentrated in Beckenham Town Centre. Operation Bumble Bee was also ongoing which is an initiative to reduce burglary.

Current police staffing levels in Bromley were 486, compared with a recommended level of the 459 under the Local Policing Model.

Bromley Police were now using body worn video equipment which had resulted in a 30% increase in guilty pleas, which was the highest increase in the Met.

3. The Portfolio Holder gave an update to the Committee on a number of matters, which included the installation of 3 CCTV cameras covering the alleyway between the Odeon Bromley and the Hill Car Park, new initiatives to tackle fly tipping, informing the Committee on the recent gang activities in Bromley, and the recent Peer Gang Review by the Ministry of Justice.

4. Paul Lehane, Head of Service for Food, Licensing, Safety and Emergency Planning gave a presentation on his team's area of work for the benefit of the new members on the Committee.

5. The latest budget monitoring position for 2014/2015 for the PP&S PDS based on the expenditure and activity levels up to 30th September 2014 shows an underspend of £35k.

6. The Youth Programme Manager Jan Smith updated on the Summer Diversionary Activities 2014. These were a great success overall, although there was a two week period when the programme was affected adversely by wet weather. The Committee was pleased that the proportion of older children had increased since last year, and that Youth Services would be looking at ways of increasing partnership working, reducing costs, and generating revenue going forward.

7. It was discussed that a joint meeting would be planned with the Education PDS Committee on the 3rd February 2015 to examine the proposed merger of Youth Services, the Youth Offending Team and the Bromley Education Business Partnership.

8. The Committee had an enjoyable visit to the Police Dog Training Centre in Keston in November. Visits are being planned to the new Fire Station at Orpington in the new year, as well as a visit to the Emergency Planning Centre in Merton in February.

Councillor Kate Lymer
Chairman, Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee