

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 20 January 2015

Present

Councillor William Huntington-Thresher (Chairman)
Councillor Lydia Buttinger (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Kevin Brooks, Samaris Huntington-Thresher,
Angela Page, Sarah Phillips, Catherine Rideout,
Richard Scoates and Melanie Stevens

Also Present

Councillor Colin Smith, Councillor Russell Mellor and
Councillor Tim Stevens J.P.

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllr Nathan.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

36 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

There were no questions to the Committee.

37 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4TH NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes were agreed.

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

Three questions were received for oral reply from Pam Notcutt.

Details of the questions (including supplementary questions) and replies are
at **Appendix A**.

39 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF REPORTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A) BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15

Report FSD15002

Based on expenditure and activity levels to 30th November 2014, the latest overall budget monitoring position for the Environment Portfolio 2014/15 showed an under-spend of £123k, with the controllable budget projected to be underspent by £89k at year-end.

Details were provided of the projected outturn with a forecast of projected spend against each relevant division compared to the latest approved budget. Background to variations was outlined.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the latest 2014/15 budget projection for the Environment Portfolio.

B) CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2ND QUARTER 2014/15

FSD14084

At its meeting on 26th November 2014, the Executive agreed a revised Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2017/18. Changes in respect of the Environment Portfolio were outlined and a revised programme for the Portfolio presented. Comments on scheme progress at the end of the first half of 2014/15 were also included.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to note and confirm the changes agreed by Executive in November 2014.

C) PARKING CHARGES

Report ES15001

Following a review of parking charges across the borough in line with the Parking Strategy agreed in 2012, and benchmarked against inflation, changes to on and off-street parking fees were recommended, along with changes to the resident parking scheme.

Details of proposed changes to parking charges were outlined at Appendix 1 to Report ES15001.

In March 2012, parking permit charges were standardised in all but the following areas of the borough:

- Bromley town centre Zone AB
- Bromley town centre Zone AC
- Camden Grove, Chislehurst
- Farnborough Village
- Ledrington

- Burnt Ash Lane (G)

For these remaining areas, Report ES15001 recommended that residential permit charges be brought into line with other residential and business parking permits at £80 to reflect full-day enforcement.

As a concession, residents over age 60 were also entitled to apply for two free books of visitor vouchers per annum. However, as carer's permits are provided at a discounted rate, the need for free vouchers is reduced. Parking Services staff also use discretion in dealing with short term issues. As such the PDS Parking Working Group recommended that the entitlement to free books of Visitor Vouchers for over 60s should cease from 1st April 2015.

No other permit related price increase was proposed at the current time and a full list of permits with current and proposed charges was outlined at Appendix 2 to Report ES15001.

Further to introducing online permit applications/renewals and online purchase of visitor vouchers last year, it was proposed to introduce Virtual Permits from 1st April 2015. Enforcement would be achievable without display of a windscreen 'permit', reliance instead being placed on use of the Vehicle Registration Mark.

Although no increase in permit charges was proposed at present, a full review of permit parking and financial analysis was recommended (including visitor vouchers) within 12 months, the findings being reported back to the Committee.

Although it was difficult to assess whether the proposed increase in parking charges might affect the number of visitors to town centres, a decline in visitor numbers might be expected for the first one or two years of the new charges. It was suggested that the proposed increase represented a good balance; if raised higher, the increase could present further problems. The proposed charges compared well with high streets in neighbouring boroughs and other parking providers in the borough.

The Chairman highlighted the latest national projections for economic growth. The likelihood would be that the demand for parking in the borough's high street would increase. The increase in charges should therefore meet the challenge for parking supply by maintaining a turnover in parking spaces rather than discourage visitors. The increase would not only cover inflation since before the financial downturn but would also take account of projected inflation to 2016/17. The increase would also help to meet costs for updating parking machines and signs. Charges had not increased since 2012.

The Portfolio Holder also referred to the local economy indicating that the on-street charges had been proposed for traffic management reasons, Council's not being permitted to raise income from on-street charges. It was however permissible for Councils to use revenue from off street parking to help cover costs associated with other transport measures e.g. Freedom Passes.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree:

(1) the proposed parking charges set out at Appendix 1 to Report ES15001 with effect from 1st April 2015;

(2) the following changes to the resident permit parking scheme effective from 1st April 2015 -

- **revised charges for the six areas highlighted at Appendix 2 to Report ES15001**
- **the introduction of virtual permits from 1st April 2015**
- **cessation of the entitlement to free books of Visitor Vouchers for the over 60s;**

(3) that a review of the impact of revised parking and permit charges be undertaken after 12 months; and

(4) that the Executive Director of Environment & Community Services be authorised to agree with the Portfolio Holder minor changes to parking charges to address local priorities.

40 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

A) CLOSURE OF BECKENHAM, BROMLEY AND WEST WICKHAM PUBLIC TOILETS

Report ES14094

Members considered a proposal to save £67k by closing Beckenham, Bromley, and West Wickham High Street public toilets (declaring the Beckenham property surplus to requirements) and introducing Community Toilet Schemes as alternative provision (six premises at Beckenham, eight premises at Bromley Town Centre, and five premises at West Wickham). Most of the agreements have no revenue cost implications, based upon the 'Open London' scheme or utilising other premises with no fee-paying requirements. The additional cost of new entrants to the scheme amounted to £2k pa; a list of the Community Toilet Scheme business partners being appended to Report ES14094.

Provisional results of public consultation on the toilet closures were tabled for the information of Members. These related to a total of 54 responses received between 18th December 2014 and 12:00, 19th January 2015.

Councillor Russell Mellor (Copers Cope) addressed the Committee. Councillor Mellor had received a number of concerns, a principal one being that the consultation period started on 18th December 2014, shortly before the Christmas/New Year holidays. He therefore welcomed an extension to the consultation period which was now set to close on 31st January 2015. Councillor Mellor highlighted concern for the opening times of the community

toilet schemes at Beckenham which some could find inconvenient. The opening times of the Costa Coffee facilities had been questioned and it was understood that the facilities at the Odeon Cinema would open at 2pm. The opening times of facilities at the Spa Leisure Centre and public halls opposite St George's Church were also questionable. The facilities at Sainsbury's were understood to comprise a single cubicle with poor cleansing.

Councillor Mellor also highlighted that some of the Community Scheme facilities were on the periphery of the town whereas the existing public facilities were located in the centre. A number of more elderly residents could be reluctant to visit the town centre if it were perceived there is a lack of facilities. Against savings that could be made from withdrawing the existing facilities it was necessary to consider the community benefit for residents. Councillor Mellor felt that this was not unreasonable.

Councillor Mellor also highlighted recent investment to improve Beckenham Town Centre in order to encourage more visitors and shoppers. Should footfall increase, Councillor Mellor suggested that adequate facilities could be denied to visitors.

Should the Committee support the recommendations, the Chairman suggested it would be provisional subject to the outcome of consultation ending 31st January 2015. There would be opportunity to give further scrutiny to the proposals at the Executive and Resources PDS Committee meeting on 4th February 2015.

In looking to ensure that high standards of cleanliness and quality are consistently maintained in the community toilet schemes, particularly those provided from food outlets, officers would monitor the cleanliness of Community Toilet facilities. Residents had reported that they were concerned about cleanliness of the Sainsbury's Open London provided facilities and officers would look to give a high priority to cleanliness ensuring the facilities were of an acceptable standard. Facilities within food premises were also subject to further inspection for food hygiene purposes by Environmental Health Officers. If standards were consistently poor at a facility consideration would be given to terminating the contract with the provider.

It was suggested that the proposals were fundamentally a revenue decision which needed to be weighed against priorities in more difficult areas. In closing the existing facilities, alternative toilet facilities would be provided. In addition to community toilet provision, a number of retailers also provided separate facilities for their customers. It was confirmed that opening hours for the existing Beckenham public toilet comprised 7am to 9pm Monday to Saturday and 7am to 7pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

In response to a concern that facilities at premises in the "Open London" scheme might not always reflect an organisation's corporate standards (the Council would have no contract with the local premises), it was explained that officers would need to build a relationship with store managers. Where local

management proved resistant to concerns from the Council, officers would take matters to a higher level in the company's management.

Should access to facilities at Costa Coffee, Beckenham be restricted by tables, chairs and other furniture, particularly for those with a disability, it would be possible to withdraw payment of a premium to provide facilities for disabled users. Officers would look at the Costa Coffee facilities to assess their accessibility, particularly for disabled users. If necessary it would be possible to negotiate further with the company to seek improvements.

The Vice-Chairman felt it was an undesirable decision to have to take and for a large part of the community the decision could be difficult. However, the facilities available in the community scheme provided a degree of choice for residents and she hoped this was a little more acceptable. She added that this was not the most difficult decision that would have to be made in considering next year's budget. It was however important that the community scheme facilities are kept clean and the premises signposted.

During consultation a number of comments had been made about signage and officers would consider the Community Toilet Scheme signs for display on the windows of premises. It was necessary to remove any concern that a purchase would have to be made before using community scheme facilities.

As there were now a number of facilities in high streets, the Chairman suggested that retailers in an area could take on a more prominent role. At Orpington, a Business Improvement District (BID) had been established and the BID organisation was now managing toilet provision within the town centre. A significant amount of public funding had been invested in the borough's high streets and the Community Toilet Scheme maintained a provision of toilets - the Chairman suggested that businesses could perhaps do more now.

Members supported the recommendations to the Executive.

RESOLVED that the Executive be recommended to agree:

- (1) the closure of Beckenham, Bromley and West Wickham High Street public toilets from 31st March 2015;**
- (2) that the Beckenham public toilet be declared surplus and offered to the market, on the basis that if offers are not forthcoming the public toilet should be demolished; and**
- (3) that the expansion of the Community Toilet Scheme be authorised as the alternative provision set out at paragraph 3.7 of Report ES14094.**

41 METROPOLITAN POLICE ROAD TRAFFIC PRESENTATION

Inspector Dave Osborne (accompanied by PC Cath Linney, Metropolitan Police Traffic Unit, Catford), outlined work of the Metropolitan Police Roads

and Transport Policing Command. This was a new Command combining traffic responsibilities with safer transport in London. It oversees policing on London's road and transport network working in partnership with, and significantly funded by, Transport for London to tackle transport related crime, improve road safety, and reduce the number of traffic related injuries and deaths on London's roads.

A 20mph speed limit was being introduced on some roads in certain London Boroughs and a 20mph limit was also being piloted on some TfL roads. Following a relaxation of Department for Transport guidelines in 2013, sole reliance was now placed on signs to highlight a speed limit. Met Police only enforce a 20mph limit in specific problem areas and engineering solutions were suggested as a more general deterrent.

Reference was made to Community Roadwatch, involving members of the public liaising with police officers to identify speeding motorists. Although there were currently difficulties training volunteers for the role, TfL were keen to take the initiative forward.

“Operation Safeway”, aimed at improving cycle safety in the capital, was also highlighted. Started in November 2013 following a period of cycling fatalities that year, the operation provides high profile enforcement at key spots on the London road network, L B Bromley having three Safeway Hotspot junctions as follows:

- the junction of Bromley High Street (or is this Kentish Way?) with Widmore Road;
- the junction of Station Road and Spur Road, Orpington; and
- the junction of A213 Croydon Road with High Street Penge.

Over 300 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued at the junctions since last year, including some for cyclists for offences such as proceeding through red traffic lights. For drivers, offences included those using mobile phones when driving and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In discussion, a number of questions were asked and observations made.

It was concerning that some motorists seemed increasingly willing to “jump” red traffic lights, the junction of Bromley Common with Hayes Lane and the junction at Bickley point both being highlighted for the offence. Inspector Osborne offered to pass the concern to the local MPS Safer Transport team.

To involve volunteers in Community Roadwatch, it was confirmed that funding was necessary to calibrate the speed guns and there were problems in meeting demand for the guns (they needed to be calibrated each year). TfL would be approached to explore whether funding could be provided to enable training. In the meantime, trained police officers would be available and volunteers could be briefed. Community Roadwatch did not need a lot of police resources and volunteers wanting to be involved would not be turned away at a location. A safer community ward contact was also available.

It was highlighted that a number of cyclists used roads in Darwin ward. Even though a narrow road could be blocked to motorists with up to three cyclists riding side by side, it was confirmed that this was not illegal. Some vehicles also travelled at excessive speed along Shire Lane. The road was narrow in places with a potential problem should a motorist encounter a heavy goods vehicle along the road. Acknowledging a problem of excessive speed, Inspector Osborne suggested that some mobile speed enforcement capacity could be used at the location.

Rather than use speed guns, it was suggested that speed limit signs be designed to make more of an impact. The Portfolio Holder also highlighted a problem of mobile phone use by some motorists when driving and would support any trial enforcement campaign in the borough against the practice.

Inspector Osborne confirmed that Met Police also contributed to the easing of traffic congestion. This included helping to maintain the free flow of traffic through Blackwall and Rotherhithe tunnels and enforcing against inconsiderate parking on red routes. Concerning enforcement against uninsured drivers, the continuing success of Operation Cubo had resulted in a large number of vehicles being seized, the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) contributing significantly to enforcement success. ANPR was installed in police vehicles to identify any passing uninsured vehicle. The technology was available to officers both daily and during targeted enforcement.

The Met Police were grateful for the support of LB Bromley, highlighting that work of the borough's road safety officers was respected throughout London.

The Chairman thanked the Met Police representatives for their attendance indicating that more Community Roadwatch activity was desired in the borough with Members supporting continued enforcement activity including enforcement against uninsured drivers.

42 DRAFT 2015/16 BUDGET

Report FSD15003

Members considered the Portfolio Holder's Draft 2015/16 Budget incorporating future cost pressures and initial draft budget saving options as reported to Executive, 14th January 2015.

Executive requested that each PDS Committee consider the proposed initial draft budget savings and cost pressures for their Portfolio, with the views of each PDS Committee reported back to the Executive's next meeting on 11th February.

Concerning a proposal to cease the development function in parks, it was explained that this related to landscaping development. The core service for

parks would not be affected and costs for any future development landscaping in parks would have to be met from grant funding.

By reducing the frequency of paper collections from weekly to alternate week collections, it was suggested there might be increased litter problems and a greater influx of online “fix my street” requests. However, it was considered that a number of residents would retain paper in their home or garage. If it was necessary to keep paper bins outside, officers would encourage residents to cover the bins. Streets would also be cleaned by the Council’s street cleansing contractor.

Paper levels and associated revenue were already in decline and a primary reason for moving to an alternate week collection; any additional income reduction from paper had been modelled into the draft budget. To help increase paper tonnages it would be necessary to encourage more recycling. Measures to help achieve this are considered by the Committee’s Waste Working Group.

Should an alternate week paper collection be aligned with green box collection dates, it was suggested there might be a temptation to place excess paper in the green box. This was accepted, but associate waste advisers would be available to advise residents. Extra bins could also be provided as necessary. An alternate week paper collection would be considered in detail at a forthcoming Portfolio Holder meeting.

It was not possible to fine householders for leaving out waste/recycling before collection day, but any material so left could be regarded as a fly tipping problem if insufficiently protected. Waste/recycling should also be left for collection within the curtilage of a property and netting could help keep boxes and lids together.

Proposals were also noted to introduce collection charges for domestic clinical waste (or at least transfer the costs back to the relevant health authority). It was suggested that this should be a matter for the health authority and officers were working to this end.

RESOLVED that the Committee’s comments on the 2015/16 draft budget be provided to the Executive for consideration at their meeting on 11th February 2015.

43 CHISLEHURST ROAD BRIDGE - POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

Report ES15005

Members considered a post implementation review of the reconstruction of Chislehurst Road Bridge.

The structure of the original bridge (having been found to be weak) was replaced with a comparable steel structure, including provision of a fibre

reinforced polymer enclosure to assist with future inspections and bridge maintenance; the enclosure effectively shielding the bridge from the elements and helping to maximise its service life. The enclosure enables inspection and maintenance of the bridge without the need to arrange costly rail possessions through Network Rail.

The project was delivered successfully, reinstating use of the section of the A208 at Chislehurst Road/Orpington Road for all users of the highway including HGVs and buses. It was delivered according to the contractual programme and within budget, with the road opening to traffic on 16th November 2012, following a start on site on 7th November 2011. The project outturn of £3.994m was within the original budget allocation of £4.114m. The project also found success in the Constructing Excellence Awards, winning the category for Outstanding Customer Satisfaction (London & South East Awards 2013).

Report ES15005 also outlined that a further, previously unknown, telecommunications cable was identified during utilities diversionary work. As a result, a change in procedure was subsequently considered necessary in respect of requests for Utility Searches received by the Council's NRSWA team. Although information regarding all main utilities is routinely checked, should a search request be received, a procedural change to include all inactive utilities in the search results had now been implemented.

For future projects of a similar scale it was also recommended that the PDS Committee Chairman and/or local ward member be invited to join the project board.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

44 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME, MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS, AND CONTRACTS REGISTER

Report ES15003

Members supported a special Environment Portfolio Holder meeting being convened on 18th February 2015 to consider a proposal to revise the frequency of the kerbside paper collection service. Members of the Committee were welcome to attend the meeting to offer comment.

It was also agreed to change the date of the Committee's next meeting from 11th March 2015 to 17th March 2015.

RESOLVED that:

(1) the Committee's work programme be agreed subject to the date of the Committee's next meeting being recorded as 17th March 2015;

(2) progress related to previous Committee requests be noted; and

(3) a summary of contracts related to the Environment Portfolio be noted.

The Meeting ended at 9.27 pm

Chairman

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QUESTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM PAM NOTCUTT FOR ORAL REPLY

1. Will the Portfolio Holder give the actual (rather than estimated) running costs for each of the public toilets at Beckenham, Bromley and West Wickham in 2013/14 under the following headings?

Cleaning
Electricity
Water
Repairs and maintenance
NNDR 2013/14

Reply

Given Pam Notcutt's representation of the Beckenham Society, the Portfolio Holder focused on providing the following data related to the Beckenham public toilets:

2013/14 Actuals - Beckenham Public Toilets

	£	
Cleansing contract	11,359	
Running costs		
Electricity	4,194	Note1
Water	1,706	
NNDR (2013/14 prices)	1,663	
Property Maintenance costs	985	
	19,907	

The above does not include capital costs.

Note 1 Electrical Heaters are fitted into the Bromley and Beckenham toilets. The information above is accurate in terms of actuals shown in the Accounting System. However due to end of year estimating of Q4 bills the actual electricity consumption in 2013/14 and therefore cost for Beckenham was higher (£4,877). The higher consumption figures have been reflected in revised budgets for 2014/15.

Supplementary Question

Pam Notcutt asked if the Portfolio Holder thought it necessary to know what disaggregated costs were considered essential to achieving savings.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that the main focus of need related to an overall policy of saving some £20k per annum by no longer having to meet operating costs associated with the toilets.

2. What data has been collected by the Council on usage of existing facilities e.g. headcounts and over what period to assess the number of alternative toilets and hours of opening needed?

Reply

Data usage (for all public toilets across the Borough at that time) was last collected by means of counting machines installed in the toilets during March/April 2008.

Supplementary Question

Pam Notcutt suggested that water costs for Beckenham public toilets were significantly higher than water costs for Penge public toilets, indicating a higher level of use for the Beckenham facilities. She also suggested a risk that businesses could limit the provision of facilities, highlighting a reduction in the number of business provided facilities in L B Richmond. She further suggested that it might be necessary for the Council to pay businesses for the provision of additional facilities.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that six locations would be provided at Beckenham for community toilet facilities, suggesting there was no reason why the Beckenham Community Toilet Scheme should not be successful.

3. What attempts has the Council made to secure continued funding for the public toilets e.g. on-site advertising revenue; takeover by a community group or commercial operation; or retention by the Council incorporating an additional on-site use under its current investment scheme in commercial property?

Reply

Several large companies (including four large car dealerships) have been approached regarding sponsorship but have unfortunately declined.

If a commercial or voluntary group comes forward with a viable proposal to retain a publically accessible toilet at this location we will gladly consider their proposal and the business case.

Supplementary Question

Pam Notcutt enquired whether other means had been explored for keeping the Beckenham toilet open.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that he would be pleased to see more potential sponsors and interested parties stepping forward e.g. a business or community/voluntary group with funding.

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