

**RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 5 November 2019

Present:

Councillor Michael Rutherford (Chairman)
Councillor Suraj Sharma (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Yvonne Bear, Julian Benington,
Kim Botting FRSA, Josh King, Alexa Michael and Gary Stevens

Also Present:

Ade Adetosoye OBE, Chief Executive
Councillors Nicholas Bennett J.P., Mark Brock, Ian Dunn,
Peter Morgan and Michael Tickner

39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Suraj Sharma.

40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

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

41a QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE

No questions were received.

41b QUESTIONS FOR THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER

No questions were received.

42 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

43 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Members considered matters outstanding from previous meetings.

RESOLVED to note that all outstanding actions from previous Minutes had been completed.

44 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO REPORTS

44a BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20 Report FSD19097

The Committee considered an update on the latest budget monitoring position for 2019/20 for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing portfolio based on activity levels up to the end of September 2019.

Members were advised that the projected overspend for 'Running expenses' (para. 3.8), was due in part to the costs of the housing furniture scheme in the amount of £170k; this would be offset by a drawdown from the Welfare Fund. The remaining overspend related to the Building Control Trading Account reserve which was an accounting requirement. The overspend was offset by a drawdown from earmarked reserves.

In regard to the Housing Needs deficit of £228k, the Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration highlighted the increased use of nightly paid accommodation outside of London. Whilst it appeared beneficial as the charges were lower, the Housing Benefit subsidy was capped at the January 2011 Local Housing Allowance rates which made placements more costly than those in London, especially when removal and furniture costs were factored in.

It was noted that, not for the first time, the Travellers budget was overspent by £54k. This was partly due to one particular site experiencing a high use of utilities and the cost of maintenance which included the installation of water meters and the loss of income due to rent arrears.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the latest 2019/20 budget projection for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio.

45 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 27 November 2019:-

45a BECKENHAM LIBRARY AND CULTURAL VENUE – AUTHORITY TO PROCEED TO PROCUREMENT

Report DRR19/051

Members were requested to consider a proposal to move Beckenham Library from its current site into Beckenham Public Hall - a Grade II listed building with significant potential for community use and situated in a more central town location.

Members were also requested to consider the option of making the existing Beckenham Library site available for housing.

The Assistant Director, Culture and Regeneration informed Members that as part of the Regeneration Strategy in development, opportunities were being sought to improve and enhance the borough's libraries. In addition, Council owned sites were being assessed for housing and current results suggested there was not enough to meet the target of 1000 homes. This report was, therefore, a good news story in that the scheme had the potential to address both those needs.

Having been assessed for housing, the existing library site could accommodate 46 homes (50% affordable) as shown in the appendix. Cushman and Wakefield had provided a professional view that the site value was £2.12m.

High level feasibility work had been undertaken by officers to assess the potential of transforming Beckenham Public Hall into a new modern library and cultural venue.

The work undertaken suggested that the site had potential, however further information was required to understand the true viability of the scheme.

Therefore this report merely sought initial approval to proceed to procurement for an architect led team to undertake surveys and develop costed concept designs. If shown to be viable, full community consultation would take place prior to a report coming back to Members to request to proceed to the next stage of development.

Visiting Ward Member for Clock House, Councillor Ian Dunn, addressed the Committee on behalf of the local community. The West Beckenham Residents' Association had written to him raising concerns in regard to:-

- the impact of the development on the vitality of the area;
- the impact of the development on the Elm Road Conservation Area; and
- the availability of public transport.

The existing library was one of three focal points in the area. Relocation would inconvenience visitors to both the spa and library. The building itself was located opposite the Grade II listed building Venue 28 and situated within a Conservation Area. Councillor Dunn suggested that the views of the Assistant Director of Planning be sought prior to proceeding further.

The site was readily accessible from Beckenham with four bus routes along Beckenham Road and Clock House railway station nearby.

It was clear there were a number of previous options for the proposals and Councillor Dunn urged the Committee to ask officers to evaluate these before proceeding further.

The Assistant Director Culture and Regeneration assured Councillor Dunn that the proposals for the scheme did take the Conservation Area into account and discussions with the Planning Department had been undertaken. Public transport had also been addressed in the Equality Impact Assessment.

Visiting Ward Member for Copers Cope, Councillor Michael Tickner, acknowledged that a feasibility study for the proposals would be undertaken. In regard to inconvenience/convenience of the library relocation for local residents, this obviously depended on how close they lived to either the existing library site or the proposed relocation site.

Councillor Tickner accepted there was a pressing need to provide housing however, it was important to ensure that, if feasible, the development was very sympathetic to the surrounding area and in particular the Grade II listed Venue 28 building.

Part of the basement of Beckenham Public Hall was currently leased to a private members' club and Councillor Tickner queried whether the club would be able to remain in situ during redevelopment of the building. The Assistant Director, Culture and Regeneration saw no reason why they would need to move out as the area was separated from the main building.

Councillor Tickner supported the proposals and welcomed the upgrading of libraries within the Borough.

In opening the debate, Ward Member and Committee Member Councillor King, commented on the proposals for the Beckenham Library building.

While supporting the proposal for housing including 50% affordable, he did have reservations about how the plans had been presented in the report. Massing of the development was questionable as it was located within the Elm Road Conservation Area and close to Venue 28, a Grade II listed building. The report stated that the number of units proposed may result in a value of £2m however, he questioned whether this was actually realistic. He understood there could be a number of issues with the plans and accepted that they were not final but he was apprehensive that the actual number of homes built would fall short of the proposed number and asked what would happen if this was the case. The figure appeared to conveniently match the cost of the hall renovations and adaptations.

Sale of the land to a developer would ultimately result in the Council losing control over what was built. With this in mind, Councillor King would prefer the scheme to be carried out in collaboration with a housing association.

Moving the library to Beckenham Public Hall would result in the loss of two out of three libraries in Wards north west of the Borough. GLL would likely take on responsibility for the management of any remaining hall space which, given their current industrial relations profile, was not acceptable.

Members were being asked to approve a plan at a very early stage without much detail. There was no mention in the report as to why Beckenham Public Hall was underutilised or, indeed, what criteria this had been assessed on. There was no sign of the Lambert Smith Hampton review and no details of what the enhanced facilities would offer.

As no alternative had been presented to Members, Councillor King suggested the following options be considered:-

- redevelopment with housing above a new library;
- extending the Spa and using car parking space at the side or rear of the site.
- shared facilities which had proved popular at Biggin Hill and was being proposed at West Wickham.

Councillor King moved that the recommendations in the report be deleted and replaced with the following recommendation:-

‘Agree that officers bring a report with costed alternative redevelopment proposals for the Beckenham Library site which include, amongst other options, redevelopment with library facilities on the site, back to a future Renewal Recreation and Housing PDS Committee for consideration.’

In response to Councillor King, the Assistant Director Culture and Regeneration confirmed that the site value of £2.12m was the professional evaluation submitted by Cushman and Wakefield. All monies gained from the existing library site would be reinvested in the scheme to restore Beckenham Public Hall and for fitting out the new library. The visual in the report appendix was designed to take the Conservation Area into account and the approach to deliver the housing scheme would be informed by the Lambert Smith Hampton review which was due to be presented to Members later in the year. The primary reason for underutilisation of the Public Hall was due to its current state of disrepair. MyTime had been asked to provide usage figures.

Contrary to any rumour, there were no plans to close Shortlands Library.

Relocating the library and transferring management of the service to GLL would result in the provision of a more modern and improved library service.

Councillor Benington was greatly involved in the relocation of Biggin Hill Library to the town centre. Following the move, usage of the library had increased. Doing the same with Beckenham Library would make it more accessible for the local community and should increase footfall to the town centre. Whilst acknowledging that further detail would need to be worked out, Councillor Benington fully

supported the proposals which would enhance Beckenham Town Centre and not detract from the Grade II Listed Venue 28 building. He congratulated officers on producing an excellent report.

Councillor Michael supported the scheme. There were excellent public transport links to and from the new library site. There was however, a need to be sensitive in regard to the housing scheme. A traditional design would be preferable and the development should be in keeping with the surrounding area. Members were informed that although the concept design made best use of the land available, there would be no loss of green space.

Councillor King considered the scheme would result in the loss of business in Clock House Parade.

Councillor Morgan acknowledged that the Public Hall building was seriously in need of repair and refurbishment. He considered the site value of £2.12m to be a conservative figure and believed it may be higher than anticipated. The housing scheme, consisting of traditional buildings, would be considered by way of planning applications in the usual manner. Relocating the library would be convenient for both library users and retail visitors to the town centre.

Councillor Tickner questioned the lengthy timeframe allocated up to the award of contract (para. 3.23). The Assistant Director, Culture and Regeneration advised that the Christmas holiday period contributed to the delay and approval must be sought in regard to the procurement framework. However, it may be possible to publish the design team tender earlier than anticipated.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1 the report be noted and the Committee's comments be provided to Members of the Executive;**
- 2 two further recommendations be added as set out at 3.3 and 3.4 below.**
- 3 the Executive be recommended to:-**
 - 3.1 agree to proceed to procurement for the appointment of a multi-disciplinary team, to develop a scheme for Beckenham Public Hall up to RIBA Stage 2 in the first instance, at an estimated cost of £70k;**
 - 3.2 agree in principle to use the existing Beckenham Library site for housing. The approach taken to deliver the housing will depend on the outcome of the review being undertaken by Lambert Smith Hampton and any subsequent agreement of a housing delivery vehicle. This will be subject to a further report;**

3.3 the housing scheme comprise units of traditional build; and

3.4 the timeframe allocated for publishing the design team tender up to the award of contract be brought forward.

Councillor King's vote against supporting the recommendations was noted.

45b OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR CHIPPERFIELD ROAD SITE (BROMLEY VALLEY GYMNASTICS CENTRE)

Report DRR19/059/A

As outlined in the Local Plan, the Council intended to utilise the site of Bromley Valley Gymnastics Centre and adjacent land at Chipperfield Road (St Paul's Cray), to build approximately 200 residential units.

Part of the development would include a new community facility to bring together St Paul's Cray Library and Cotmandene Community Resource Centre. There was also potential to provide a new facility for Bromley Valley Gymnastics Centre.

In this regard, Members considered the current lease arrangement for Bromley Valley Gymnastics Centre and reviewed the proposed options for the use of the site.

Members also considered the confidential financial information set out in the accompanying Part 2 (Exempt) report (DRR19/059(b)).

The Head of Regeneration outlined the report to Members.

As the current facility was not fit for purpose, Councillor Stevens welcomed the proposals and supported Option 1 as recommended although he sought and obtained assurance that the Gymnastics Centre could continue to provide a continuity of service whilst work was being undertaken.

Details of the timeframe for work to be carried out was yet to be arranged and consideration was currently being given to submission of applications for funding.

In response to a query from Councillor Bear, Members were informed that the Gymnastics Club operated within a niche market and there were some elements of concern in regard to finding alternative operators in the unlikely event that it became necessary to do so. However, officers were confident that requirements would be met.

Councillor Botting fully supported the recommendations and welcomed the development of a new gymnastics centre together with the proposed additional café and crèche facilities, which would benefit the local community.

It was agreed that the recommendations to the Executive include an additional proviso to ensure that costs/rent paid by Bromley Valley Gymnastic Centre remain fair and viable.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1 the report be noted and the Committee's comments be provided to Members of the Executive; and**
- 2 a further recommendation be added as set out at 3.3 below.**
- 3 Members of the Executive be recommended to:-**
 - 3.1 agree to re-provide a gymnastics centre for Bromley Valley Gymnastics Club as set out in paragraphs 3.12 to 3.18 of the Part 1 report;**
 - 3.2 agree the recommendation set out in the accompanying confidential Part 2 (Exempt) report (DRR19/059(b)); and**
 - 3.3 ensure that costs/rent paid by Bromley Valley Gymnastic Centre remain fair and viable.**

45c PROVISION OF HOUSING AT WEST WICKHAM LIBRARY AND STATION ROAD CAR PARK, WEST WICKHAM

Report DRR19/053

Members considered a summary of the initial feasibility work undertaken in relation to the current site of West Wickham Library and Station Road car park in West Wickham to provide approximately 34 residential units and 500sqm of commercial unit.

The report recommended that further feasibility work be undertaken in order to fully assess the viability of the scheme and a procurement exercise be run concurrently to appoint a multi-disciplinary design team. The results of this further work would be reported to a meeting of the Executive in spring 2020.

Members also considered additional confidential information set out in the accompanying Part 2 (Exempt) report (DRR19/054).

The Head of Town Centre Renewal drew Members' attention to the immense pressures on the borough in relation to housing supply and specifically in relation to affordable homes and housing for temporary accommodation. As a result, the Executive agreed that Council-owned land would be reviewed in light of its potential for residential development which included Council owned car parks.

The report identified development potential at the site of Station Road car park, West Wickham. This potential could be maximised if it was expanded to include the current site of West Wickham Library, two rear land parcels and a private road.

The report summarised the initial feasibility work undertaken to date that suggested the site was financially viable with the provision of up to 34 units but only if no car parking was retained.

Additional feasibility work was needed to build a full business case for the scheme. The report sought a political mandate to continue to look at the site together with the allocation of resources to undertake the additional feasibility work set out in paragraph 3.24.

Members' attention was specifically drawn to recommendations for the following work:-

- That a more detailed assessment of the traffic and economic impact of the loss of car parking would be completed.
- That options would be considered for the re-provision of the library on an interim basis. It may be that the outcome of this work recommended a phased approach to the residential scheme for example, to avoid relocating the library twice. It was not anticipated that the library would close except to facilitate the transition between venues. The Head of Town Centre Renewal clarified that there were no plans to relocate the library to a porta cabin in the car park of the leisure centre.
- That the massing examples provided with the report were indicative; in response to the informal feedback from planning colleagues, the massing would be reconfigured to address concerns about height and loss of privacy for residents whose properties were adjacent to the land parcels.

The outcome of this and the other items of additional work outlined in paragraph 3.24 would inform the final business case to be reported back to Members, at which point officers would recommend whether or not the site should go forward for development. It was emphasised that it was not a forgone conclusion that the scheme would be taken forward; if the outcome of the additional feasibility work showed a detrimental impact on the town that cannot be mitigated or avoided, then it may be that officers would not recommend taking the scheme forward. However, this would not be known until the additional work was completed.

The report recommended that a procurement process be run concurrently to identify a multi-disciplinary design team that would be appointed if the business case recommended the scheme go ahead. This would avoid any further delay to progressing the scheme should Members approve it be taken forward in the Spring.

Visiting Ward Member Councillor Bennett JP had discussed the proposals with officers and supported them in principle. Alternative car parks i.e. Sainsburys were very well used whereas Station Road car park was used the least. Councillor Bennett emphasised the need for housing units to be of a design appropriate to the site, in keeping with the surrounding area and not over-dominant. He did not wish the current library to be inconvenienced by moving twice and preferred the previous option of moving the library directly into West Wickham Leisure Centre.

The Council were currently in a desperate situation having to find accommodation for a total of 1600 homeless families in the borough. Once the London Plan came into effect, the target for the provision of housing would almost double.

Councillor Bennett emphasised the need for public consultation to be undertaken on the proposed scheme.

Visiting Ward Member Councillor Mark Brock highlighted the fact that these proposals were still at a very early stage.

Councillor Allatt stated that West Wickham was a popular local shopping destination. The loss of the Station Road car park could impact on parking in the High Street and may lead to the demise of retail business in the area.

Councillor Michael supported the proposals which would help to create a modern leisure centre for the local community. As reported earlier, usage of libraries had increased following similar moves to leisure centres/town centres. However, heed should be taken to ensure there was no impact on the town centre due to the lack of car parking facilities. West Wickham was a more traditional shopping centre and it was imperative that it remain so.

Councillor Stevens had received correspondence from residents and emphasised the need for their concerns to be taken into account.

Referring to Strategic Option 1 set out on page 107 of the report, Councillor Benington asked if the scheme would still be financially viable if the proposed flats at the top of the three storey central block were removed and the block reduced to two storeys. The Head of Town Centre Renewal advised that it would depend on how massing was reconfigured; any change to the number or type of unit provided would affect the viability calculation. All options to reduce the height of the development and the impact on the privacy of surrounding residents would be considered.

It was confirmed that the proposed design of the housing units would be of traditional construction methods: bricks and mortar.

The Head of Renewal agreed to circulate information to Members on the likely income that could be generated per year by the proposed 34 housing units and how much per annum could be saved on nightly paid accommodation.

Councillor Sharma considered that bullet point two on page 98 of the report should become a priority recommendation until discussions had taken place with the owners of the privately held freehold.

Councillor Bennett advised there was ample car parking available in West Wickham. The report only referred to three car parks however, there were others including Sainsburys, Lidl and the Leisure Centre. He urged Members and officers to ensure that the following points be given priority consideration:-

- the library only be relocated once the new building is ready for occupation;
- the new library building must be in keeping with the local area;
- the housing scheme consist of traditionally built housing for residents; and
- the Council engage at an early stage with affected freeholders.

Councillor Morgan was committed to ensuring that the existing library would only relocate when the new library was ready for occupation. The new library should also be in keeping with the local area.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1 the report be noted and the Committee's comments be provided to Members of the Executive;**
- 2 Members of the Executive be recommended to:-**
 - 2.1 review the feasibility work undertaken to date and approve the West Wickham library and adjacent parcels of land and the car park at station Road, West Wickham as a potential site for housing development;**
 - 2.2 approve the additional feasibility work identified at paragraph 3.24, including instructing Cushman & Wakefield to enter into formal negotiations with the land owners for the purchase of additional land to maximise the site's development potential; and**
 - 2.3 approve the procurement strategy outlined in paragraphs 4.1-4.10 for the appointment of a multi-disciplinary design team for the scheme via the ADUP (Architecture Design and Urbanism Panel) framework.**

46 HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

Report HPR19001

Members considered a summary of the work undertaken by the Housing Needs Service together with an update of key performance statistics.

The Assistant Director Housing outlined the report and referring to paragraph 3.3 advised that the number of homeless approaches to the Council had increased by four and Housing Register applications had increased by 26 but remained stable. There had been a decrease in the number of nightly paid accommodation households due to the More Homes Bromley scheme which was in the process of concluding. The number of properties available from housing associations had decreased by an average of 16 per month and moves into the private sector had decreased by one-third.

The Chairman commented on the usefulness of the report and requested that comparison column(s) be added to the headline statistics. More graphs like the Temporary Accommodation Data set out in paragraph 4.7 would be useful.

It would also be helpful to incorporate key performance targets i.e. how many people the Council aimed for in each service including how long people remained in temporary accommodation and on the Housing Register.

Members were informed that the waiting times for accommodation for accepted homeless households were:-

- two bedroom accommodation - in excess of 4½ years;
- three bedroom accommodation - 3+ years; and
- one bedroom accommodation - approximately 12 months to 2 years.

The Assistant Director Housing stated that some control was needed in regard to the housing market. Having looked on the property website Zoopla, only 6% of properties advertised in July were affordable for people reliant on benefits who were seeking to rent privately.

In regard to the approaches to service on page 114, para. 4.4 of the report, Members were advised that the 56 days referred to in the table was the statutory turnaround time.

The 'lack of action' referred to on page 117, para. 6.2 of the report, related to following up progress on cases. However, officers were now more reactive and dealt with cases quickly and efficiently. Changes had also been made to IT systems, processes and procedures.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

47 CONTRACT REGISTER

Report DRR19/057

The Committee considered an extract from the Contracts Register which provided key information concerning contracts within the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio with a total contract value greater than £50k as at 24 September 2019.

Members also considered additional confidential information set out in the accompanying Part 2 (Exempt) report.

The Chairman was satisfied with the information contained in the report.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1 the report be noted; and**

- 2 the additional confidential information set out in the accompanying Part 2 (Exempt) report be noted.**

48 RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME: JANUARY-MARCH 2020

Report CSD19139

Members considered the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee Work Programme for the period January to March 2020.

It was agreed that a report setting out the further work undertaken in regard to the abolition of Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 be scheduled.

Officers would discuss and schedule the reports listed under the heading 'To be arranged'.

RESOLVED that, subject to the addition of the above report, the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee Work Programme for the period January-March 2020 be noted.

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

The Chairman moved that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business listed 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.

50 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF PART 2 (EXEMPT) EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 2 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 27 November 2019:

50a OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR CHIPPERFIELD ROAD SITE (BROMLEY VALLEY GYMNASTICS CENTRE)

Report DRR19/059(b)

Members considered the Part 2 (Exempt) report containing confidential financial information in relation to the accompanying Part 1 report DRR19/059a.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1 the report be noted and the Committee's comments be provided to Members of the Executive;**

- 2 Members of the Executive be recommended to agree the recommendations in the report.**

50b PROVISION OF HOUSING AT WEST WICKHAM LIBRARY AND STATION ROAD CAR PARK, WEST WICKHAM – PART 2

Report DRR19/054

Members considered the Part 2 (Exempt) report containing commercially sensitive information in relation to the accompanying Part 1 report DRR19/053.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1 the report be noted and the Committee's comments be provided to Members of the Executive;**
- 2 Members of the Executive be recommended to agree the recommendations in the report.**

51 CONTRACT REGISTER - PART 2

Members considered the Part 2 (Exempt) report containing commercially sensitive information in relation to the accompanying Part 1 report DRR19/057.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman