

EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 28 July 2022

Present:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)
Councillor Shaun Slator (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Jeremy Adams, Mike Botting,
Dr Sunil Gupta FRCP FRCPATH, Simon Jeal,
Jonathan Laidlaw, Ruth McGregor, Tony Owen,
Will Rowlands, Mark Smith, Melanie Stevens,
Sam Webber and Jonathan Andrews

Also Present:

Councillors Christopher Marlow and Colin Smith

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Mark Brock sent apologies and Councillor Dr Sunil Gupta attended as substitute.

Councillor David Cartwright sent apologies and Councillor Mike Botting attended as substitute.

Councillor Julie Ireland sent apologies and Councillor Sam Webber attended as substitute.

Councillor Robert Evans sent apologies and Councillor Jonathan Andrews attended as substitute.

Councillor Marlow sent apologies and attended virtually.

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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

No questions were received.

26 QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE

No questions were received.

**27 QUESTIONS FOR THE RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND
CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

No questions were received.

**28 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS
PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2022 (EXCLUDING
EXEMPT ITEMS)**

Councillor Adams said that at the previous meeting he had made a comment in the discussion that had taken place relating to Treasury Management. He had referred to investment in sterling bonds and the current disruptions in the market. In view of this, he had urged caution in future investments in those bonds and requested that this be noted in the minutes. The Director of Finance commented that with respect to investments, the Council was currently not looking at long term investments. The Council was carefully considering the impact of inflation and interest rates.

With the inclusion of the above it was resolved that the minutes be agreed and signed as a correct record.

**29 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME
CSD22092**

A Member referred to the Investment Property Report which was now being moved to September. He asked if the Operational Property Report would also now be presented at the September meeting. The report could then be discussed at the September meeting of the Executive. The Director of Finance confirmed that it was intended that the Operational Property Report would indeed go to the September meeting or very soon after that. It would definitely need to be scrutinised in advance of any decisions regarding the Budget and Capital Programme expenditure. The Chairman commented that it would be good if both reports could be taken at the same time.

A Member referenced the report regarding the Health and Wellbeing Centre which had originally been scheduled for May. He wondered what the delay was, and as this was a health related matter, why it was coming to the Executive Resources and Contracts Committee. It was clarified that property and investment matters came to the Executive Resources and Contracts Committee and also that this report related to a 'disposal'. The delay surrounding the report was because the health organisation concerned had not confirmed final proposals.

A Member referred to the Section 106 Agreements update report which was scheduled for the October meeting. She mentioned that previously a working group had been set up to discuss these matters and was wondering if this working group was ongoing. It was noted that Councillor Marlow had chaired this group and that conclusions were drawn and recommendations carried forward. It had been determined that Section 106 matters would be discussed

by individual PDS committees. The original working group had been wound up approximately 18 months to two years ago.

A Member referenced the report with respect to the award of contracts for capital works at Redhill School and wondered why this had been scheduled in for February 2023 instead of September 2022. The Chairman said the response to this question would be forwarded to the Member in writing.

It was noted that the IT Procurement Report had been moved to September.

A Member commented that as Section 106 agreements had been replaced by CIL, would the Committee be receiving reports on CIL updates. The Chairman responded and said that Section 106 agreements were still operative and that the Council was still able to enter into both agreements.

A Member stated that many emails were being sent in from the public with respect to Biggin Hill Airport. He hoped that these emails were being picked up by the relevant officer and that the various issues would be incorporated into, and addressed in the report coming to the Committee in September.

A Member asked how it was decided what the Committee would look at and discuss. The Chairman responded and said it would be good practise to raise matters with the Chairman initially. Every Member had a right to ask for issues to be raised.

A Member queried why the Civic Centre Development Scheme was not scheduled on the Work Programme. The Director of Finance confirmed that the matter was definitely being worked on and was in hand. It was anticipated that the report would be presented to the Committee either in September or shortly after that.

RESOLVED that the Matters Outstanding and Work Programme Report be noted.

30 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period July 2022 to October 2022.

31 RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO - PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the following report(s) where the Resources, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder was recommended to take a decision.

**A COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT REDUCTION SCHEME 2023/24
FSD22060**

The Revenues and Benefits Manager attended the Committee to present the report and to answer questions.

The report detailed 8 possible options for a revised Council Tax Support/Reduction Scheme. He said that the option that was proposed for recommendation was 'Option 6.' This was the option where working age minimum liability would be increased to 30% and entitlement restricted to band 'D' Council Tax liability. This would deliver approximately £360k in savings.

The Chairman said that to mitigate against any possible adverse impacts, he was proposing an additional recommendation whereby the Portfolio Holder be requested to set aside an additional £25k in the contingency budget for each year of the scheme's operation to be drawn down by the Hardship Fund if required. This additional recommendation was seconded by the Vice Chairman.

Councillor Jeal pointed out that during the previous consultation, there had been just 154 responses out of 2000 people that had been consulted. He said that that is represented just 0.1% of Council Tax payers and so was in effect meaningless. He therefore proposed the following additional recommendation, which if accepted would be recommendation 2.5. This was seconded by Cllr Ruth McGregor.

The proposed new recommendation was that officers take measures to increase the response rate to the consultation by:

1. Setting a 1% response rate target;
2. Publicising the consultation link on the Council's website and through social media;
3. Additionally consulting local organisations supporting residents in poverty and in relation to debt management- such as Citizen's Advice, Living Well Bromley, Bromley Foodbank, Z2K, Children's Poverty Action Group and Christians Against Poverty and others considered suitable by officers.

The Chairman felt that this would involve a disproportionate amount of work and was not something that he would recommend. The Revenues and Benefits Manager said that she would endeavour to increase the scope of the consultation by working with public affairs.

A Member expressed the view that it was important to get quality insights from charities. Another felt that during the process of the consultation, it would be good to mention other funds that may be available. The Chairman suggested that Members speak to the Director of Finance to see what funds may be available and then share that information with their constituents. A discussion

took place concerning the Hardship Fund and how this should be brought to the attention of residents. The Revenues and Benefits Manager informed the Committee that applications to the Hardship Fund were now the highest that they had ever been and she was no longer expecting the fund to be under-utilised.

A Member asked how the Council assisted individuals who were not computer literate and it was explained that these individuals could present physically or make a call to the Council.

Members voted regarding the additional recommendation that was proposed by Cllr Jeal and seconded by Cllr Webber. There were 4 votes in favour of the recommendation and 9 against. The motion was lost.

The Chairman proposed the following revisions to the substantive recommendations which was seconded by the Vice Chairman, Councillor Slator.

2.1 Consider the Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme Options recommended for the public consultation exercise. The Executive Resources and Contracts Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Portfolio Holder adopt option 6 in Paragraph 4 of the report.

2.2 The Portfolio Holder to approve option 6 be recommended in the public consultation exercise for the Authority's Council Tax Support/Reduction Scheme to come into effect from the year 2023/24.

2.3 The Portfolio Holder to agree that no automatic annual consultation will take place on the Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme, as has been the case in previous years, unless an agreed proposal is put forward to revise or replace the currently agreed scheme.

Additionally:

2.4 That the Portfolio Holder be requested to set aside an additional £25K in the contingency budget for each year of the scheme's operation to be drawn down by the hardship fund if required.

A vote was taken on the revised substantive recommendations and the motion was carried by 9 votes to 6.

RESOLVED that the revised recommendations as noted above (2.1 to 2.4) be endorsed by the Portfolio Holder.

32 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the 'High Streets for All Funding' report that was being presented to the Executive on 3rd August. The Regeneration Project

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Manager attended to answer any questions that Members may have had on the report.

The report had been circulated to members of the RR&H PDS Committee with a request for comments before going to the Executive.

The Chairman expressed the view that 'Option 2' seemed like the most sensible option to proceed with.

Councillor Jeal said that his understanding was that members of the RR&H PDS Committee would submit their comments directly to the Executive so he would not be expressing any views on the night.

There were no questions for the Regeneration Project Manager.

RESOLVED that the High Streets for All Funding Report be noted.

33 INFORMATION ITEMS

A RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee noted the Risk Management data that had been published as an information briefing.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chairman