

EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 16 January 2023

Present:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)

Councillors Jeremy Adams, Mark Brock,
David Cartwright QFSM, Robert Evans, Kira Gabbert,
Julie Ireland, Simon Jeal, Jonathan Laidlaw,
Ruth McGregor, Keith Onslow, Tony Owen, Mark Smith
and Melanie Stevens

Also Present:

Councillor Christopher Marlow, Portfolio Holder for Resources,
Commissioning and Contracts Management
Councillor Colin Smith, Leader of the Council
Councillor Alisa Igoe
Councillor Shaun Slator (attended virtually)

69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Will Rowlands and Councillor Keith Onslow attended as substitute. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Marlow.

70 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Fawthrop proposed that Councillor Robert Evans be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2022/23 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Brock, put to the vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Robert Evans be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Fawthrop declared that he was an employee of BT.

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

Councillor Alisa Igoe submitted the following oral question for response by the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management:

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23/11/22 Minutes show sale of Chislehurst Library for redevelopment has failed for second time since “decision to originally dispose of the library was made by Executive Sept 2014 as a Part 2 decision” - 06/10/20 RR&H. A recommendation added 23/11/22 enables the Council, if it wishes, to consider redevelopment on its own land, to include re-provision of a library. It also allows consideration of non-Council owned land. How many private landowners, not previously discounted during past marketing, have approached the Council to date?

Reply:

None

Supplementary Question:

Can I assume that the library will be maintained, and that funding will be made available to provide disabled access and bring the building up to standard?

Reply:

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management explained that it was a question for the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing and consequently referred the question to that Portfolio Holder. The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management confirmed that the intention was to keep it as an operating library.

(prior to asking the question, Councillor Igoe declared that she had a library card)

73 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2022 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)

The minutes of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee meeting held on 23 November 2022 (excluding exempt information), were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**74 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME
Report CSD23001**

The report dealt with the Committee’s business management including matters outstanding from previous meetings and the proposed work plan for the remainder of the year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

75 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period December 2022 to March 2023.

76 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 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - QUARTER 3 2022/23 Report FSD23002

On 18 January 2023, the Executive would receive a report summarising the current position on capital expenditure and receipts following the third quarter of 2022/23 and would be asked to agree a revised capital programme for the five-year period 2022/23 to 2025/27. The report highlighted changes to be put to the Executive and the Leader in respect of the capital programme for the Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management portfolio. The revised programme for the Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management portfolio was set out in Appendix A and detailed comments on individual schemes were shown in Appendix B.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to note and acknowledge the changes to be put to the Executive on 18 January 2023.

77 SCRUTINY OF THE LEADER AND SCRUTINY OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Colin Smith, and the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Committee.

The Leader provided a brief overview noting that things had been “thrown sideways” last year following the Russian invasion. This has led to increased inflation resulting in additional costs to the Council. Whilst it had been possible to manage inflationary pressures within contracts, the additional costs to the Council were likely to result in an increase in Council Tax. The Leader paid tribute to staff for “sticking with us” over salary increases. It was acknowledged that inflation had meant that the previous pay settlement had not reflected pressures around the cost of living, and this would be reviewed during consideration of the budget report during the Executive meeting on 18 January 2023.

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The Leader reported that the Council continued to challenge the Mayor of London's proposed ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zone) extension as aggressively as possible. In addition, the Environmental Team were braced for potential bad weather in the coming days and issues with potholes were being addressed.

Turning to the Council's finances, Bromley had received a reasonable settlement from the Government and senior Members and Officers continued to lobby the Government over fairer funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management highlighted that the unprecedented financial situation has made it difficult to forecast and the Council had seen many of its costs increasing with very few options for increasing income.

Officers had worked hard on the Operational Property Review and the Portfolio Holder highlighted that it was reasonable for the Council to review how services were provided and the estate it required. Once again, the Portfolio Holder reiterated that the Council would not be engaging in fire sales of any property deemed surplus to requirement.

The Meadowship 2 scheme had been delivered which was positive news. Delivery of the scheme had been made more challenging by volatility in the gilt market in September, however Officers had overcome these challenges.

The Portfolio Holder remarked that a low point had been receiving a further challenge from Biggin Hill Airport Limited.

The Leader and the Portfolio Holder then responded to questions, making the following comments:

- In relation to the ULEZ, the Leader confirmed that along with 4 or 5 likeminded outer London boroughs, Bromley continued to challenge. The Council would continue to follow legal processes and legal advice was being sought in relation to whether the Mayor of London needed permission to instal signs and equipment on non-TfL roads.
- The Leader confirmed that, in his view, it was unlikely that the outcome of the fairer finding review would be known this side of a general election.
- In relation to property disposals, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management provided reassurance that assets would have a reserve price. The Leader highlighted that it was difficult to predict the direction of the commercial property market and any reserve price would be the "best guesstimate" but it was clear that it was not the intention to give away free money to speculative purchasers.
- The Leader highlighted that it was highly unlikely that there would be a reduction on the statutory obligations placed on Councils. In recent years there had been an increase in regulations and higher safety

standards all of which placed increasing pressures on local authorities to deliver more in an ever-tighter funding envelope.

- The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management confirmed that he was comfortable with capital commitments as they were for the medium term. There was however no spare capacity.
- In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management confirmed that it was not just Biggin Hill Airport Limited that was concerned about the impact of the Civil Aviation Authority's decisions around Runway 03, residents were also concerned. The Council was actively considering the issue and would instruct external counsel as appropriate.
- In response to a question around housing, the Portfolio Holder explained that in an ideal world the Council would not consider taking on any debt, however, were the Council to do so there had to be a net benefit. It was possible that borrowing could be considered to reduce the costs of temporary accommodation but there needed to be detailed consideration of how any debt would be serviced. The Portfolio Holder was clear that the Council would not be undermining its general principal of remaining debt free. The Leader confirmed that all options that represented the best deal for the Council would be considered.
- The Leader highlighted that for many years the Council had been lobby for improvements to public transport in the borough – extensions to the DLR and trams into Bromley – but every request had been turned down. In the current climate big infrastructure projects looked unlikely but it would be helpful if the Council, with cross-party support, continued to push for improvements to public transport. The Leader also highlighted that consideration had to be given to the sustainability of the current funding model for public transport.
- In response to a question concerning potential threats to Bromley's status as "London's Best Borough", the Leader suggested that one of the key threats was compulsory housing targets, which could threaten the green belt. It would help if the affordability index was reduced as this could increase the supply of housing.
- In response to a question around what it meant to rethink the relationship between the citizen and the service, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management stated that Bromley was fortunate to be a settled borough with a settled population. As such there was a plethora of community groups all of which made a huge difference to the quality of life for residents. As a Council, Bromley was able to leverage the various partnerships in order to continue to deliver better outcomes for residence. One such example of this was the One Bromley Partnership.
- In response to questions from the Chairman around the pending office move, the Leader explained that the intention was to move staff in phases starting in June. Phases 1 and 2 would involve relocating Bromley staff. In terms of the amount of office space required, a 50/50 balance of working from home and office based had been decided

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upon by the Chief Executive and the Director of HR. The situation was fluid and in response to a question from the Chairman, the Leader confirmed that staff had not been mandated to return to the office. Phases 3 and 4 of the move could involve the potential relocation of other agencies but before all the available space was taken elected members would be consulted on the eventual office/working at home balance.

The Committee thanked the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for their updates.

78 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 18 January 2023:

(5) DRAFT BUDGET 2023/24 AND UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY Report FSD23003

The report sought approval of the initial draft 2023/24 Budget including the full year effect of changes agreed as part of the 2022/23 Council Tax report and savings approved during the year with the resultant impact on the Council's medium term "budget gap".

A key part of the financial strategy was to highlight the budget issues that would need to be addressed by the Council over the coming financial years, by forecasting the level of available resources from all sources and budget pressures relating to revenue spending. Details of the capital programme and the impact on the revenue budget was reported elsewhere on agenda.

PDS Committees views would also be sought and reported back to the next meeting of the Executive, prior to the Executive making recommendations to Council on the 2023/24 Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept levels.

The report provided details of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 which was published on 19th December 2022 and represented a one-year settlement only, with limited indication of funding for 2024/25. The awaited Fair Funding Review and changes relating to the devolution of business rates, which could have a significant impact on future funding, had been delayed until at least 2025/26 – more realistically unlikely to be implemented until 2026/27.

There were still outstanding issues and areas of uncertainty remaining, including, for example grant conditions, which could impact on the final revenue budget. Any significant changes would be reported to the Executive and further updates would be included in the 2023/24 Council Tax report to the next meeting of the Executive.

In response to a question about the budget line for external counsel advice, the Director of Finance confirmed that responsibility for the Legal Service rested with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management. There were recharges but the initiator for counsel advice was through the Legal Service.

Noting that costs for local elections occurred every four years, the Chairman queried whether funds could be set aside annually to spread the cost. In response the Director of Finance agreed that there was a choice and there had possibly been a historical decision not to treat the funds as earmarked reserves by setting aside funds annually. However, there were different approaches that could be taken, and the funding could be reviewed.

The Director of Finance set out the budget process noting that individual PDS Committees would now receive and review portfolio budgets. The PDS contributions would then be reported back to the Executive in February.

The Chairman proposed the following additional recommendation for the Executive to consider:

2.1.12 That the Executive agrees that where possible any identified savings should be taken in year.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Owen.

Noting that Bromley had not had any return from its contributions to the London Boroughs Grant Committee Councillor Tony Owen proposed the following amendment to recommendation 2.1.6:

The proposed contribution of £246,470 in 2023/24 to the London Boroughs Grant Committee not be agreed.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Fawthrop.

The recommendations to the Executive, including the amended recommendation 2.1.6 and the additional recommendation 2.1.12 were put to the vote:

10 in favour

4 against (Councillors Jeal, Adams, McGregor and Ireland requested their votes against be recorded)

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to

- 1. Note the initial draft 2023/24 Budget detailed in Appendix 7.**
- 2. Refer the initial draft 2023/24 Budget for each portfolio to the relevant PDS Committees for consideration.**

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3. **Note the financial projections for 2024/25 to 2026/27.**
4. **Note that there are still areas of financial uncertainty which will impact on the final 2023/24 Budget.**
5. **Agreed increased rent levels for London Affordable Rents and Social (Formula) Rents by 7% from April 2023 as set out in Section 12.2 of the report.**
6. **Not agree the proposed contribution of £246,470 in 2023/24 to the London Boroughs Grant Committee (see section 22 of the report).**
7. **Delegate the setting of the schools' budget, mainly met through Dedicated Schools Grant, to the Education, Children and Families Portfolio Holder, allowing for consultation with the Schools Forum (see section 23 of the report).**
8. **Note that the outcome of consultation with PDS Committees will be reported to the next meeting of the Executive.**
9. **Note the outcome of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement 2023/24 as detailed in the report.**
10. **Note the budget gap remaining of an estimated £29.6m per annum by 2026/27 and that any decisions made for the 2023/24 Budget will have an impact on the future year projections.**
11. **Note that any final decision by Executive on recommended Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept levels to Council will normally be undertaken at the next meeting of Executive.,**
12. **Agree that where possible any identified savings should be taken in year.**

**(6) CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2026/27 & Q3 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING
Report FSD23001**

The report incorporated the Council's new Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2026/27. It also summarised the current position on capital expenditure and receipts following the conclusion of the third quarter monitoring exercise.

The report included details of the new schemes that would be added to the Capital Programme and information concerning the proposed asset disposals that would be used to generate capital receipts and ultimately contribute towards the funding of the Capital Programme.

Also included were details of the related Capital Financing implications, including proposals to refinance current housing schemes through borrowing,

utilisation of revenue reserves to address the shortfall in capital resources for 2023/24 onwards and details of how these proposals would impact the Council's revenue budget.

In opening the discussion, a Member raised some questions around the additional expenditure arising from the Operational Property Review (OPR). In response, Director of Finance explained that the report before the Committee reflected the latest position on capital spend for the next four years. However, there were some uncertainties, such as the Churchill Theatre, where more work was required and there were also challenges around inflation which could also result in additional costs to the Council.

The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful for the Committee to receive an update on the Capital Programme at every meeting until the situation settled. The Director of Finance highlighted that progress on the Capital Programme was monitored through the quarterly Capital Programme Monitoring reports.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to

- 1. Note the report, including a total rephasing of £565k from 2022/23 into future years, and agree a revised capital programme.**
 - 2. Agree the Capital Strategy for 2023/24 to 2026/27 including the following amendments to the capital programme:**
 - (i) Adjustments identified as part of the capital monitoring process totalling a net reduction of £14,825k**
 - (ii) An increase of £74,801k in relation to new schemes which will be added to the Capital Programme**
 - 3. Approve the refinancing of the Council's existing Housing Schemes through external borrowing of £49.2M via the Public Works Loan Board.**
 - 4. Approve the use of up to £10M from the Council's earmarked revenue reserves to support funding of the Council's capital programme.**
 - 5. Agree that all new and existing Housing Schemes should be funded by long-term borrowing.**
- (7) COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION/SUPPORT SCHEME 2023/24
Report FSD22091**

The report advised Members of the result of the public consultation exercise and seek approval for the scheme to be put forward to Full Council.

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In response to a question surrounding the 38 responses that had been excluded for not being in-borough, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that the determination to exclude had been done on whether the responses had come from a verified source. Members noted that the excluded responses would not have had a material impact on the outcome of the consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management thanked the Revenues and Benefits Manager for the way in which the consultation had been conducted welcoming the improvement response rate and extra engagement.

The Chairman drew attention to the response provided by the GLA which was included at page 167 of the agenda pack.

In response to a question concerning the analysis of the likely impact of the proposals of those with protected characteristics, the Revenues and Benefits Manager highlighted that people affected by the proposals were likely to make an application to the Hardship Fund.

The recommendations were put to the vote:
9 in favour
4 against

The motion was therefore CARRIED. (Councillor Jeal request that his vote against be recorded.)

RESOLVED: That Executive be recommended to

- 1. Note the revised Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2. Note the responses to the public consultation exercise at Appendix 2 & 3 of the report.**
- 3. Agree the Council Tax Support scheme from 2023/24 restricts the calculation of entitlement for working-age claimants to 70% of the households' Council Tax liability.**
- 4. Approve the introduction a band "D" eligibility restriction from 2023/24.**
- 5. Recommend that Full Council agree that the Council Tax Support scheme from 2023/24 increases the Discretionary Hardship Fund to £225k per annum.**

**(8) PROCUREMENT STRATEGY - PROCUREMENT OF LEASE CARS
AND LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES
Report ES20240**

The report considered the ongoing procurement of vehicles provided under the staff lease car scheme and those cars and light commercial vehicles allocated for departmental use when the current framework operated by Crown Commercial Service (Ref: RM6096) ended on 15th May 2023.

Consultation with the Director of HR & Customer Services and individual fleet user departments had confirmed that the Council had an ongoing requirement for the acquisition of motor vehicles to support the provision of services.

The Chairman noted that there was a discrepancy in the figures provided in paragraphs 12.2 (£2.96m) and 13.2 (£3.10m) of the report and requested that an explanation be provided before the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 18th January 2023.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Highways explained that there was a cash alternative for staff who had a car as a contractual benefit.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to

- 1. Agree the forthcoming framework operated by the Crown Commercial Service be utilised to lease any required cars and light commercial vehicles from 16th May 2023 until 11th January 2027 and the continued use of the framework for any extension period that may be applied by Crown Commercial Service.**
- 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Environment & Public Protection to approve the use of the Vehicle Lease, Fleet Management & Salary Sacrifice call-off framework (Ref; RM6268) with successful suppliers, upon its award by the Crown Commercial Service, in January 2023.**

**(9) HOMES FOR UKRAINE
Report HPR2022/032**

The report provided an update on the Homes for Ukraine response by the Council and approach going forward.

An update on the Homes for Ukraine scheme would be provided to Executive quarterly, this report was the second of the update reports.

Noting that there had been a higher number of approaches than anticipated, the Committee heard that households were being rematched, and staff were looking at options within the private sector market in order to prevent people going into temporary accommodation.

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A Member thanked Officers for the work they had done to deliver a fantastic Ukrainian Orthodox Christmas event on 6th January 2023 highlighting that the event, held on a Saturday, had demonstrated how much staff cared. It was hoped that more events could be hosted.

RESOLVED: That Executive be recommended to review and note the contents of the report in relation to the current activities under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

**79 EXCHEQUER SERVICE - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT
Report FSD22092**

The report provided information regarding Liberata's performance in the provision of Exchequer Services for the period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 with an updated position as at 30th November 2022. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's Contract Director, provided an update on each individual service and was attached at Appendix 1 of the report with statistical data relating to the services shown in subsequent appendices.

In opening the discussion, a Member asked that for future reports the graphs presented be reformatted to make them easier to understand.

In response to a question from the Chairman, representatives from Liberata explained that in October there had been a large number of invoices for the NHS. Members noted that Bromley's policy was that invoices were paid immediately on receipt whilst the NHS had a longer turn-around time. The Committee requested that details of the average payment time for NHS invoices be provided in the next report. The Chairman suggested that it may also be helpful to review the legislation and remind the NHS of their duty to pay invoices on time.

The Committee discussed the issue of disputes and Members noted that it was not unusual for disputes to be raised. Ultimately, only the service department could resolve disputes and the Council would normally ask that any element not of an invoice not in dispute be paid. The Assistant Director for Exchequer Services highlighted that in the last year the level of disputes had reduced by 16%.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**80 BENEFITS SERVICE MONITORING REPORT
Report FSD22089**

The report provided information regarding the performance of the Benefits Service provided by Liberata for the period 1 April to 30 November 2022. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field Liberata's London Regional Contract Director was attached as Appendix 1 of the report. And provided Liberata's perspective of performance, together with an update on initiatives to be introduced in the coming months.

The Committee discussed the number of people waiting more than 80 days for change of circumstances to be processed. The Revenues and Benefits Manager highlighted that it was the responsibility of the customer to provide details and they were given extra time to do this which accounted for some of the delays. When the service was made aware that someone was vulnerable, avenues of support were investigated and provided where necessary. Members noted however that assistance could only be provided in cases where the service was made aware of an issue.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**81 REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT
Report FSD22090**

The report provided information regarding the performance of the Revenues Services provided by Liberata for the period 1 April to 30 November 2022. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's London Regional Contract Director, provided an update on each of the individual services and was attached Appendix 1 of the report with statistical data relating to the Revenues Service attached at Appendix 2.

Members noted that reminders and final demands signposted customers to avenues of support that were available however, many customers who found themselves in difficulty tended to put their head in the sand and did not access the support that was available.

The Committee discussed the Empty Homes Premium and Members noted that it incentivised homeowners to bring their properties back into use. In response to a question, the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that if a property was uninhabitable an application had to be made to the Valuation Office to take the property out of the ratings.

The Committee noted that Council Tax collection rates had not returned to pre-Covid levels. Members noted that more long-term arrangements were in place and the service was trying to be as flexible as possible. In response to a question, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that no analysis had been undertaken of the impact of a further rise in Council Tax on people in arrears.

The Committee were advised that the rise in the amount of collectible debt could be attributed to the fact that businesses were struggling in the current economic climate. There had been an increase in the number of cases referred to enforcement agencies and the Committee requested that a future report provide details of whether Bromley was in line with other Local Authorities.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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82 CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT Report CSD22126

The report provided information on the performance of the Customer Service Contract provided by Liberata for the period 1st May 2022 to 31st October 2022. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Contract Director for Liberata, provided her update on each individual element and was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Committee heard that Liberata did not use mystery shoppers, but internal quality checks were carried out with managers listening in to the quality of calls and customer feedback was regularly reviewed. The Assistant Director for Customer Services also confirmed that the Client Team checked a random selection of calls, and the output was discussed at the monthly service review meetings.

A Member reported that an increasing number of complaints were being received from residents who were confused about the call system. In light of the increasing number of complaints, it was suggested that a review of the call system needed to be undertaken.

The Chairman requested that details of the number of call bail outs, misdirected calls and abandoned calls be provided in a future report to the Committee. The Assistant Director of Customer Services confirmed that where details of the date and time of misdirected calls were provided it would be possible to track and investigate. Members noted that steps were taken to rectify misdirected calls where they were identified.

In response to questions around the performance of the Out of Hours Service, the Committee noted that call centres across the UK had struggled with attrition and sickness in the last year. July was a particular pinch point, as this was one of the main months where staff looked to take annual leave thus further reducing levels of available staffing. Discussions had taken place with the out of hours provider and an improvement plan had been put in place. In addition, performance meetings were now taking place on a weekly basis and whilst performance had remained slightly below target, it was improving. The Chairman requested that an update on the performance of the out of hours service be provided at the next meeting or the one after, along with details of the longest elapsed time that someone was waiting for a call to be answered and the longest elapsed time before a call was abandoned.

In response to a question, the Committee noted that the proof-of-concept voice bot had been tested internally and was going live in the Registrars Service on 17 January 2023.

A Member noted that compared with 12 months ago there were less calls but no improvement in performance. It was agreed that further analysis should be undertaken and reported back to the Committee. There were a number of

contributing factors with calls taking longer and call handlers having to deal with increasingly complex issues.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

83 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**

84 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2022

The Part 2 (exempt) minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 were agreed, and signed as a correct record.

The Meeting ended at 9.43 pm

Chairman