

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 31 January 2024

### **Present:**

Councillor Tony Owen (Chairman)  
Councillor Thomas Turrell (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Josh Coldspring-White, Will Connolly,  
Christine Harris, Colin Hitchins, Tony McPartlan,  
Chris Price, Alison Stammers and Pauline Tunncliffe

Tommy Velvick, Bromley Youth Council (Part 1 only)

### **Also Present:**

Councillor Yvonne Bear, Portfolio Holder for Renewal,  
Recreation and Housing

#### **46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no additional declarations of interest.

#### **48 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

One question for oral reply and two questions for written reply were received at the meeting. A copy of those questions, together with the Portfolio Holder's responses can be viewed as Appendix A to these Minutes.

#### **49 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

#### **50 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME Report CSD24013**

The report set out progress against outstanding actions from previous meetings and the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

The Chairman reported that he had spoken with Network Rail and had invited them to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss development opportunities. Network Rail was actively working with a developer to bring forward plans to develop a site adjacent to Bromley North Station in tandem with a planned development of an adjacent Local Authority-owned site. Network Rail was not taking forward any other development plans at present but had agreed to provide an overlay of its landownership in Bromley to the Local Authority. Once this was received, work would be undertaken to identify whether there were any further development opportunities, particularly in relation to adjacent sites where development could go forward in partnership. Network Rail had confirmed it was not interested in developing land at Orpington Station used as a car park.

A Member thanked Officers for arranging a Member visit to Crystal Palace Subway for which the major restoration project had recently been completed. The Chairman suggested that the works team be invited to the formal opening ceremony and this was supported by the Committee.

**RESOLVED: that the report be noted.**

## **51 HOLDING THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO ACCOUNT**

The Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing provided an update to the Committee on her activities.

The Bromley Business Growth initiative had been launched in December 2023 and would provide free advice and assistance to Bromley businesses, including two new local support services available via the Local Authority's partners at Goldsmiths, University of London and Newable. The Good Work Bromley Exchange had also been launched and brought together a range of partners to support people into employment through SWAPs and Work Skill Programmes, including those with additional needs. The majority of projects being delivered across the Portfolio were on schedule with the renovation of ten tennis courts across the Borough successfully completed and four out of the six Changing Places facilities funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Changing Places scheme now live.

In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder explained that the sale of the Civic Centre site came within the remit of the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management.

**RESOLVED: That the update be noted.**

**A HOUSING, PLANNING AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO  
PLAN UPDATE - 2023/24 Q3 UPDATE  
Report HPR2024/005**

The report presented the 2023/24 Quarter 3 update to the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan.

In considering the update, a Member asked about households moving into permanent accommodation. The Assistant Director: Housing explained that the ongoing limited availability of social housing and private rental properties impacted the Local Authority's ability to move households into permanent accommodation and that this was exacerbated by the reluctance of some households to engage with the bidding system for permanent housing, particularly as the quality of temporary accommodation continued to improve. Going forward, it was planned to make more direct offers of permanent accommodation as well as to work with social and private landlords to maximise available properties. Homelessness prevention would continue to be a priority with the aim of supporting households to sustain existing accommodation arrangements and reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation.

In response to a question from a Member on rough sleeping, the Assistant Director: Housing confirmed that the Housing Service worked closely with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Changing Places to maximise the use of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 5 grant funding. This grant was currently funding the entire front-line Rough Sleeping Team as well as services specific to the needs of this vulnerable group that were commissioned from a range of specialist partners, including Thames Reach.

**RESOLVED: That progress on the actions associated with the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan for Quarter 3 of the 2023/24 financial year be noted.**

**52 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 1 (Public) agenda for the meeting of the Council's Executive on 7 February 2024:

**A HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME AND CHOICE BASED  
LETTINGS (APPROVAL TO ADOPT NEW POLICY)  
Report HPR2024/002**

The report presented the findings and outcomes of the statutory eight-week public consultation on the draft Housing Allocations Scheme alongside the final proposed scheme for which the approval of the Council's Executive was sought.

In considering the report, a Member queried what happened if an offer of housing was refused. The Assistant Director: Housing explained that the

Local Authority had a statutory duty to support households into suitable accommodation. While every effort was made to ensure that housing was appropriate, including suitability and affordability assessments, there were cases where households chose to refuse the housing offered. In these limited cases, the Local Authority's duty came to an end, although further offers of housing could be made in very limited circumstances including households whose requirements were complex or had changed. The Member suggested that some households might refuse housing where properties were located out of the Borough. The Assistant Director: Housing agreed but underlined the need to manage expectations as the reality was that there were very few homes available in Bromley and it was important to communicate this to those seeking accommodation through the Local Authority.

**RESOLVED: That the Council's Executive be recommended to:**

- 1) Review the results of the consultation exercise and note any amendments in relation to the proposed Housing Allocation Scheme; and,**
- 2) Approve the proposed Housing Allocations Scheme for adoption by the Local Authority.**

**B AFFORDABLE HOUSING - POLICY AND STRATEGY  
DOCUMENTS  
Report HPR2024/001**

The report presented the findings and outcomes of the statutory eight-week public consultations on the draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Policy which the Local Authority was required to produce and adhere to as a stock holding authority alongside the final proposed documents for which the approval of the Council's Executive was sought.

**RESOLVED: That the Council's Executive be recommended to:**

- 1) Review the result of the consultation exercises and note any amendments in relation to the proposed Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Policy; and,**
- 2) Approve the proposed Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Management Policy for adoption by the Local Authority.**

**C HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONTRACT (AWARD) PART 1  
(PUBLIC) REPORT  
Report HPR2024/003**

The report sought approval from the Council's Executive to agree a short extension of terms with Pinnacle, the existing provider of the Housing Management Contract, from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024 and agree that a

new contract commencing on 1 July 2024 be awarded in principle as set out in the accompanying Part 2 (Exempt) report).

**RESOLVED: That the Council's Executive be recommended to:**

- 1) Approve the short extension of terms with Pinnacle for a period of 12 weeks commencing 1 April 2024 and expiring 30 June 2024 at an estimated value set out in the accompanying Part 2 report;**
- 2) Approve award of contract in principle, as detailed in the accompanying Part 2 report;**
- 3) Grant delegated authority to the Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration to finalise the award of contract subject to heads of terms being agreed, in agreement with the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Finance; and,**
- 4) Grant delegated authority to the Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration, subject to agreement with the Assistant Director: Governance and Contracts, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing, to apply the extension option in due course.**

## **53 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS**

### **A RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25 Report FSD24008**

The report considered the Portfolio Holder's draft 2024/25 Budget which incorporated the future cost pressures, planned mitigation measures, savings from transformation and other budget options reported to the Council's Executive on 17 January 2024. Members were requested to consider the initial draft budget being proposed and to identify further action that might be taken to reduce cost pressures facing the Local Authority over the next four years with a view to the Council's Executive making recommendations to Council on the 2024/25 Council Tax levels. There were still outstanding issues and areas of uncertainty remaining and any further updates would be included in the 2024/25 Council Tax report to the meeting of the Council's Executive on 7 February 2024.

In response to a question from a Member on the high demand for temporary accommodation, the Head of Finance: Adults, Health and Housing agreed that growth pressures remained challenging but that a projected increase of twenty households per month had been factored into the draft 2024/25 budget which would help contain costs. The Member asked whether selective licensing for private rented properties that were not Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) had been explored as an option and the Portfolio Holder confirmed that all

housing options were considered but that licensing came under the remit of the General Purposes and Licensing Committee. The Chairman further advised the Committee that Gareth Bacon MP had recently contacted the Home Office to highlight pressures on temporary accommodation in the London region from the placement of asylum seekers in local hotels.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1) The update on the financial forecast for 2024/25 to 2027/28 be noted;**
- 2) The initial draft 2024/25 budget be noted as a basis for setting the 2024/25 budget; and,**
- 3) The Council's Executive be recommended to note the comments of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee on the initial draft 2024/25 budget at its meeting on 7 February 2024.**

**54 RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING INFORMATION BRIEFING**

The items comprised:

- Park Buildings Lease Process and Grant Payments
- Empty Homes in Bromley

In response to a question from a Member on the Empty Homes in Bromley Information Briefing, the Head of Regeneration explained that empty properties were primarily reported to the Council Tax service but could be identified in other ways, such as through untidy site enforcement. Whilst the Local Authority had the power to serve compulsory purchase orders, such measures had a significant cost implication and work was underway to develop a more affordable support package that would bring vacant properties back into active usage. The Local Authority had recently submitted a bid to the Mayor of London's Council House Acquisition Programme which could fund the purchase of additional homes for use as social housing if it was successful.

**RESOLVED: That the Information Briefing be noted.**

**PART 2 (CLOSED) AGENDA**

**55 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**

**56 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND  
HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

The exempt minutes of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

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

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 2 (Exempt) agenda for the meeting of the Council's Executive on 7 February 2024:

**A HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONTRACT (AWARD) PART 2  
(EXEMPT) REPORT**

The Committee considered a Part 2 (Exempt) report on the Housing Management Contract.

The Meeting ended at 7.43 pm

Chairman

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## RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE 31 JANUARY 2024

### QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

#### 1. From Councillor Will Connolly to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Following the Mayor of London's activation of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in January 2024, what actions are being taken to protect vulnerable people sleeping rough through additional emergency accommodation and how is it planned to spend the £89k Homelessness Reduction Grant (carried forward) for services for young people?

#### Reply:

*The Council provides a robust response to SWEP through our Single Homelessness Pathway. Emergency cover is provided outside of office hours by our Housing Team.*

*Each individual supported during the SWEP period is provided with emergency accommodation. Where appropriate those placed will either go on to have a full homelessness assessment or be signposted to a relevant agency for support. We work with a number of partner agencies across the borough and commission ThamesReach to provide outreach services; responding to sightings of rough sleepers and supporting them into accommodation and linking them with services.*

*With regard to the £89k Homelessness Reduction Grant for young people, we are exploring a number of options which are yet to be finalised. These include the delivery of tailored training and information sessions to schools and workshops for young people including our Care Leavers. Plans are being explored with Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid, LBB Community Safety, Health and other partners working with young people. A proposal will be coming forward in March.*

#### Supplementary Question:

Can the Portfolio Holder guarantee that the Homelessness Reduction Grant will be spent within the 2023/24 financial year?

#### Reply:

*This grant will be spent before expiry. The Local Authority has no intention of returning any grant funding.*

## QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY

### 1. From Stuart Mayer to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Orpington is classified as a Major Centre in the London Plan - yet the current provision of goods and services doesn't fulfil this designation.

What measures are being put in place to improve the town's ability to adequately serve those living within its catchment, and ensure that provision isn't further eroded?

#### Reply:

*Planning policy provides a framework for assessing planning applications that are submitted to the Council, but it cannot force applications to be submitted, nor dictate what types of retail or services are provided. Applications for new retail, commercial and leisure uses in Orpington Town Centre would be supported in principle, in line with policy objectives and the overarching Major centre designation. Conversely, proposals involving a loss of retail, leisure or commercial provision would need to justify loss against policy requirements, including demonstrating that this loss does not harm the function of the town centre.*

*The Council is currently reviewing the Local Plan and will be updating evidence on local needs to inform the policies of the new plan.*

### 2. From Councillor Alisa Igoe to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

DWP allocated £3,735,765 to Bromley's Household Support Fund (closes March 2024). Council papers show £1,320,639 was spent by end-September 2023. At this rate of use, with £2,412,126 for October to March, an underspend is possible. Was this reviewed in October, as stated in Item 11, Executive 29/03/23, and what was the decision?

#### Reply:

*The scheme opened to applications from targeted groups referred by a set group of partners in June 2023. During the period June to September 2023 applications were only accepted from referrals made by the set group of partners. The October return represents these applications processed and the free school meals holiday vouchers. The scheme opened to applications from those who met the eligibility criteria on the first of October and the return for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (which includes applications from targeted groups as well as all other applications) shows that 81% of the total budget has now been spent. We are consequently on target to spend the whole of the allocation.*