

EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 15 May 2023

Present:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)
Councillor Robert Evans (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Jeremy Adams, Jonathan Andrews,
Mark Brock, David Cartwright QFSM, Kira Gabbert,
Julie Ireland, Simon Jeal, Ruth McGregor, Tony Owen,
Will Rowlands, 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 (attended virtually)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Jonathan Andrews attended as substitute for Councillor Jonathan Laidlaw.

Apologies were received from Councillor Shaun Slator.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of Item 9 on the Executive agenda (Health and Welling Centre Update), Councillor Gabbert declared that she was a patient at the Dysart Surgery.

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

1 question for written response was received and this is attached at Appendix A.

4 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2023 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)

The minutes of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee meeting held on 22 March 2023 (excluding exempt information), were agreed and signed as a correct record.

5 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME Report CSD23064

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.

The Director of Finance would confirm when the Committee would receive a review of the Household Support Fund following the meeting.

Members noted that a further report on Biggin Hill Airport was likely to be presented to the Executive in the autumn.

Noting that a meeting had been scheduled for August 2023, a Member highlighted that a number of Members of the Committee may be on holiday during this time and it may be helpful to consider whether the meeting needed to go ahead.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

6 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period May 2023 to August 2023.

7 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 17 May 2023.

(6) CONTRACT AWARD OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE CRYSTAL PALACE PARK REGENERATION PLAN Report HPR2023/026

In February 2023, the Executive approved the procurement of a new multi-disciplinary team (Report No. HPR2023/007) to take forward the delivery of the Regeneration Plan for Crystal Palace Park; the rationale for that report being urgent was due to the timescales associated with the grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which the Council was successful in securing to progress the development phase of the scheme.

This report was a recommendation to award the contract for multi-disciplinary consultancy services to deliver the capital schemes from RIBA Stages 2-7. The report was marked as Urgent as the project would be utilising grant funding which had timescales attached for delivery. Call in would therefore not apply.

The report also provided an update on the outcome of the advertisement of the Open Space Notice in relation to the proposed disposal by way of a grant

of a long lease of Crystal Palace Park to the Crystal Palace Park Trust, pursuant to section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

In response to a question the Head of Regeneration reported that extensive work with potential suppliers had been undertaken to ensure the quality aspect of the contract. The quality aspect was taken very seriously, and a supplier day had been held. The Regeneration Team were very happy with the outcome of the tendering process and the proposed contractor had a background in heritage.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to

- 1. Approve the recommendation outlined within the Part 2 report in relation to the award of the works contract for the multi-disciplinary team to deliver the Regeneration Plan.**
- 2. Approve the representations outlined in relation to the proposed disposal by way of a grant of a long lease of Crystal Palace Park to the Crystal Palace Park Trust, pursuant to section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972.**
- 3. Note the objections made together with responses to these contained within the Report and formally agree to the Disposal of the Open Space Land.**

(8) ARMED FORCES COVENANT REFRESH

The report summarised a recent review of the Council's work under the Armed Forces Covenant and planned future work to support Bromley's Armed Forces Community as part of the renewal of the Covenant.

The Committee noted that very few staff took advantage of the time off that was currently available and a key element of the action plan being developed was to improve this. Noting that the Council offered the 10 statutory days paid leave, the Chairman suggested that options for extending the entitlement to time off should be considered in the future to encourage more staff to participate. Another Member suggested that it may be helpful if the paid leave allowance reflected the minimum commitment required for organisations such as the Territorial Army.

A Member suggested that in relation to recruitment policies, options for offering guaranteed interviews for veterans meeting the minimum person specification should be considered and reflected in the developing action plan. Similar policies could be offered in relation to the provision of housing with the period that veterans have been serving not being considered as a period out of the Borough.

The Committee requested that a report outlining the number of service personnel supported by the Armed Forces Covenant be provided at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to

- 1. Note the review of the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Bromley;**
- 2. Note the ongoing work being done to meet the aspirations outlined in the Armed Forces Covenant for Bromley signed on 24 April 2013; and**
- 3. Note that Sara Bowrey, Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration and Councillor Mike Botting are Council Officer Armed Forces Champion and Council Member Armed Forces Champion respectively.**

**(9) BROMLEY TOWN HEALTH AND WELLBEING CENTRE
UPDATE**

The report provided Members with an update to the provision of a new Health and Well Being Centre (HWBC) by the NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) in Bromley Town Centre.

A Member of the Committee, who was a Bromley Town ward councillor highlighted that ward members had been given very little time to provide comments on the proposals within the report. The Chairman responded that the revised proposals had been developed very quickly and commended officers for the speed of the work that had been done. The Chairman noted that whilst there was an obligation to consult ward members where possible, sometimes due to the speed required to develop proposals it was not always possible to consult.

The Director for Planning, Regeneration and Housing emphasised that this was an NHS scheme. Early feasibility work had indicated that the space in the newly acquired 'Direct Line' building was a viable alternative for the Health and Wellbeing Centre. The project was currently at an early stage and there would be further consultation.

A Member noted that it was helpful to hear that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) fully supported the proposals.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to note the report.

8 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

A COUNCIL MOTION - DIGITAL INCLUSION Report CSD23065

At the meeting of the full Council on 12th December 2022 a motion was submitted for debate by Councillors Chloe-Jane Ross and Julie Ireland on the subject of digital inclusion. The following motion was referred to this Committee for further investigation and report back:

“Council notes:

- At a high level, the digital divide is the gap between those with Internet access and those without it.
- As access to some public services is moved online some Bromley residents may have difficulty accessing them. In some cases, this may be an inconvenience and in others it may impact their quality of life.
- It has previously been estimated 18% of Londoners lack basic digital skills (ONS 2019), with at least 9% not having any (Lloyds 2019). Analysis also shows that 10% of Londoners do not own a smartphone (Ofcom, 2020). This could mean tens of thousands of Bromley residents are digitally excluded from accessing online services.
- The main reason people lack digital access is older age (Bromley has a higher-than-average older population). Disabilities, learning difficulties, ethnic origin, location, culture and language, and low income are also important factors.
- Some residents will always need an offline option to access services.

Council believes:

- Bromley must be a fair and inclusive borough for everyone” (Bromley’s Equality Policy)
- Digital services have been beneficial to both the Council and local people as they are efficient, accessible and trackable.
- Increased accessibility and usage of digital services is desirable.
- There must be an alternate offline option for those unable to access digital services.

Council therefore calls for:

- The creation of a Digital Exclusion Champion to ensure there is support for local people who do not have digital access.

15 May 2023

- The development of a Council Digital Inclusion Strategy which will help reduce the digital divide in Bromley.
- A review of non-digital service provision to ensure it is robust and accessible to those that need it, including scenario mapping for critical services.
- A commitment to use information the Council delivers to every house in the borough to include information that will improve digital inclusion and support those that are digitally excluded.
- All council policies to give specific consideration to people without digital access.
- All Council contractors and service providers have policies in place to improve the accessibility of their digital services and offline access to their services for residents that cannot access them digitally."

Councillor Ross addressed the Committee highlighting her passion for and personal commitment to improving digital inclusion.

Members of the Committee recognised the issues around digital inclusion and the impact that a lack of digital inclusion could have on peoples' lives. A Member of the Committee highlighted that there was a duty on everyone to address the issue of digital inclusion and suggested that there could be a role for Ward Councillors in supporting the use of apps used by the Council and sign posting residents to the support that was available. Members also highlighted the support that was available from libraries.

Another Member reported that nearly 20% of Londoners had been found to lack basic digital skills. Age Concern had expressed alarm around the impact of a lack of digital inclusion. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to have a strategy for digital inclusion and someone championing the issue.

The Committee recognised that the use of IT and technology was only going to increase over time and there was a need to ensure that all residents were included. There were different demographics across the Borough and therefore the impact of digital inclusion would be different depending on the part of the Borough in which residents lived.

The Chairman proposed the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Kira Gabbert:

"That the Committee requests that Chief Officers review their directorates and take reasonable steps to review digital inclusion within existing policies and report back to the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee by September 2023 if any deficiencies are identified."

In response to a question, the Chairman confirmed that every service should be included in the review and there should be a meaningful attempt to identify

and address deficiencies in digital inclusion. Once Chief Officers had reported the outcome of the review back to the Committee issues could then be referred to other PDS Committees where appropriate.

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That the Committee requests that Chief Officers review their directorates and take reasonable steps to review digital inclusion within existing policies and report back to the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee by September 2023 if any deficiencies are identified.

9 INFORMATION ITEMS

The items comprised:

- Risk Management

In response to questions on the HR and Customer Services Risk Register, the Head of Corporate Health and Safety confirmed that in relation to HR Reference 4 (recruitment and retention for hard to fill posts), the recruitment event was held in January.

A Member requested further reassurances that there was no risk to the Council around equal pay claims. It was agreed that the Director of HR and Customer Services should be asked to provide a response following the meeting.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Corporate Health and Safety reported that there would be an update in the next version of the Risk Register around the provision of First Aiders. Staff were now being offered a £20 per month allowance as an incentive to become a first aider. In addition, more first aid kits were being purchased.

In relation to the Corporate Services Risk Register, the Assistant Director for IT confirmed that the risks around cyber security were very high and in the past few months there had been an increase in cyber-attacks. Officers were considering options that could be put in place to mitigate these risks.

10 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**

11 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE REPORTS (IF ANY)

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 2 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 17 May 2023:

13 CONTRACT AWARD OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE CRYSTAL PALACE PARK REGENERATION PLAN

The Committee noted the report.

12 PART 2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

A PART 2 CONTRACTS REGISTER AND CONTRACTS DATABASE UPDATE

The report presented May 2023's Corporate Contracts Register for consideration. Detailed scrutiny of individual contracts was the responsibility of the six PDS Committees but ER&C PDS took an overview of the Council's larger value (£200k+) contracts to ensure that commissioning and procurement activity was progressed in a consistent manner. The report provided both the Council wide £200k+ register together with the £50k+ register specific to the ER&C Portfolio. The Contracts Register presented in 'Part 2' of this agenda included a commentary on each contract to inform Members of any issues or developments.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Contracts and Governance confirmed that two contracts had been flagged because extensions should be sought at least six months before the end date of the contract and this requirement had not been met. The services have been advised to action the extension decision as soon as possible.

In response to further questions, the Assistant Director for Governance and Performance confirmed that Officers had identified contracts where the proposed office move could have an implication and procurement options were being considered, including variations as appropriate. Very few contracts would require amendment as a result of the move other than a blanket change of address variation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The Meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chairman

EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES & CONTRACTS

POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED FOR WRITTEN REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE

1. From Ms Angela Wilkins to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management

The Council at its meeting in December 2022 merely agreed a strategy document concerning the possible sale of surplus properties. Who, exactly, authorized the subsequent decision to put Community House on the market immediately and on what legal authority or process was that decision made and then approved by members?

Reply:

The Council at its meeting in December ratified the Executive decision to take to market a number of properties and then report back to the Executive on the offers received. It was also agreed that Community House and the Retail Parades would be sold at auction. Both the Part 1 and Part 2 Reports were scrutinized by ERC PDS before being taken to the Executive and then Full Council in December.

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