

RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 19 June 2024

Present:

Councillor Tony Owen (Chairman)
Councillor Josh Coldspring-White (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Will Connolly, Christine Harris, Charles Joel,
Tony McPartlan, Keith Onslow, Chris Price and
Pauline Tunncliffe

Also Present:

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

Councillor Alison Stammers and Councillor Jeremy Adams
(observing)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hannah Gray and Councillor Keith Onslow attended as her substitute. Apologies for absence were also received from Tommy Velvick.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER Report CSD24060

The Committee was asked to confirm the appointment of a non-voting Co-opted Member representing Bromley Youth Council for the 2024/25 municipal year.

RESOLVED: That Tommy Velvick be appointed as a non-voting Co-opted Member of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year for the consideration of Part 1 (Public) reports only.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

4 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.

**5 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING
PDS COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 14 MARCH AND 17
APRIL 2024**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 14 March and 17 April 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

**6 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND FORWARD WORK
PROGRAMME
Report CSD24073**

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

With regard to Minute 64A: Portfolio Holder Update, Members were advised that the remaining £89k Homelessness Reduction Grant (carried forward) had been used to relieve homelessness for young people with 57 young people aged 21 years and under placed in temporary accommodation as of 31 March 2024. Details on the allocation of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds had been circulated to Members as requested in Minute 65b: Capital Programme Monitoring. The Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration added that Section 106 funds had been allocated to a range of housing, health and education schemes whilst CIL funding was more flexible and could be used to fund wider infrastructure improvements including roads, transport, health and education schemes.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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

A PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S UPDATE

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

The Library Repair Works Programme continued to progress. Works were on schedule at the Southborough and West Wickham libraries and had recently commenced at Beckenham Library with a temporary library provision now open at Lewis House. With regard to other projects, all Changing Places facilities were now open to the public and works were underway to install two new cricket pitches ready for use later in the Summer. Propping had been completed at West Wickham Leisure Centre which would enable the refurbishment works to commence, and the Portfolio Holder was pleased to announce that the Local Authority had just secured a £6M Salix grant towards the refurbishment of the West Wickham and Walnuts leisure centres that would fund state-of-the-art air source heat pumps. Other activities within the Portfolio included the continued rollout of dark fibre internet across the

Borough and the delivery of a number of events such as a parade to celebrate Bromley Football Club's promotion to the English Football League.

A Member flagged a concern arising from the recent sale of commercial units by the Local Authority with some tenants reporting significant increases in rent and/or the introduction of service charges from their new landlords. The Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration advised any affected tenants to request a rent review which would determine whether increases in rent or additional charges were appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

**B HOUSING, PLANNING AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO
PLAN UPDATE - 2023/24 Q4 UPDATE
Report HPR2024/025**

The report presented the 2023/24 Quarter 4 update to the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan.

In considering the update, a Member asked about the review of the current Homelessness Strategy. The Assistant Director: Housing reported that an additional staff resource was now in place to support work in this area and that an update would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee on 12 September 2024. Another Member asked about the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the Assistant Director: Housing advised that this initiative targeted rough sleeping. The allocation of funds was agreed in collaboration with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and, where a case could be made, it was possible to carry forward remaining funds from one round to the next.

With regard to temporary accommodation, a Member asked for a geographical breakdown of out-of-Borough placements and this would be provided to Members following the meeting. The number and reason for placement refusals was not recorded; however, every possible effort was taken to place households in appropriate accommodation, including a formal suitability assessment. The Member asked about the length of stays for nightly temporary accommodation and the Assistant Director: Housing clarified that this varied significantly depending on whether households remained in the same temporary accommodation for the duration of their wait to be settled in a permanent home and that further information would be provided to Members following the meeting. Another Member asked about variations in the number of households approaching the Local Authority for support with housing and homelessness and was advised that some variations were seasonal or related to factors affecting the market, such as new legislation, and that other variations were natural. The Housing Team worked 365 days a year to support those in need of advice or assistance and every effort was taken to support staff in this high-pressure area, including regular supervision and training.

Another Member raised the issue of planning appeals and asked whether there was any differentiation between the success of appeals against decisions made via the respective routes of Committee and delegated decisions. The Portfolio Holder was pleased to advise that as a result of intensive work in this area, the number of successful appeals had significantly reduced in recent years with no major appeals successful for the year to date and only three non-major appeals upheld with 23 dismissed. The latest report of appeals costs would be provided to Members following the meeting. Following the launch of the new planning system, further analysis could be undertaken on Planning appeals if needed, and it was also planned to introduce a new Key Performance Indicator to monitor planning enforcement. The Member queried the Risk Register with regard to Risk 5: Recruitment and Retention: Failure to recruit and retain key skilled staff with suitable experience/qualifications. The Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration explained that this risk reflected the difficulties in recruiting to certain skilled areas, including Planning, and that work to mitigate this risk included strategies such as 'grow your own' development programmes, salary benchmarking and the work of the Corporate Recruitment and Retention Board. The Planning Service was fully staffed at the present time, but recruitment and retention would continue to be monitored closely.

A Member noted work by the Property Service to support the move to the new Civic Offices and queried how much surplus space remained to be let. This workstream fell within the remit of the Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management Portfolio but Members were advised that it was planned to refurbish this space prior to letting to meet the local demand for premium quality office space.

RESOLVED: That progress on the actions associated with the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan for Quarter 4 of the 2023/24 financial year be noted.

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

The Committee considered the following Part 1 (Public) report where the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing was recommended to take a decision:

A FINAL OUTTURN REPORT 2023/24 Report FSD24043

The report provided details of the final outturn position for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio Holder for the 2023/24 financial year.

A Member asked about plans for the Planning Service to generate additional income and was advised that this primarily related to bespoke advisory services, such as Performance Planning Agreements. It was hoped to pilot some additional services using existing Planning Service resources with a

view to establishing whether there was a business case to continue with or expand bespoke provision. The Chairman observed that the Building Control Service also had income generating potential but that there was currently a shortfall between fees and associated costs due to competition from private providers.

A Member asked a question about how the rising costs of temporary accommodation would be managed within the Portfolio budget going forward. The Head of Finance: Adult Social Care, Health and Housing explained that the budget for the 2024/25 financial year had allowed for the full-year effect of cost pressures but that a further increase in costs during the year was likely to create a pressure going forward into the 2025/26 financial year. Another Member asked about the use of commercial hotels for emergency placements and was advised that there were a small number of Bromley hotels that were used regularly but that bookings were made for large hotel chains such as Travelodge and Premier Inn when needed. Every effort was made to maximise the use of Beehive and Local Authority-owned Affordable Housing including tighter nominations processes that minimised vacancies.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to accept the 2023/24 final outturn position for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio

9 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 10 July 2024:

A PROCEEDING TO PROCUREMENT: MANORFIELDS TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION Report HPR2024/021

The report sought the approval of the Council's Executive to proceed to procurement and begin construction works on the Manorfields site in Orpington for the purposes of providing Transitional Accommodation.

In considering the report, a Member and Ward Councillor queried the £5.2M estimated budget. The Head of Regeneration confirmed that cost estimates for the planned programme of works had been sought from several contractors and that the final estimate included an element of inflation in case of any delay. Should the anticipated Local Authority Housing Fund grant not be secured, a revised and re-costed approach to refurbishing Manorfields would be developed for Members' consideration. It was proposed to take a holistic approach to the refurbishment of Manorfields as transitional accommodation with the new provision expected to have a lifespan of 25-years that would be further supported by a programme of regular planned maintenance. Due to the layout of the building, it was planned to undertake a phased decant during the period of works that would also minimise disruption for households. Another Member welcomed the positive relationship that local

residents had with Manorfields residents and underlined the need to ensure that these strong community relations were maintained going forward.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be supported.

**B PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICE - CONTRACT
PERFORMANCE REPORT AND VARIATIONS
Report HPR2024/023**

The report set out contract modifications applied to the contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited to provide library services to date and sought approval to regularise these in line with the Council's procedures, as well as for further contract modifications related to the Library Repair Programme. The report also sought approval for a scheme of delegation to manage future contract modifications.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Culture explained that the internal cleanliness of library facilities was monitored with a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). There was no KPI for the upkeep of the external building and site, but arrangements were in place to keep library sites tidy including regular window cleaning and clearing debris, such as fallen leaves. A Members asked that the full list of KPIs be provided to Members following the meeting as well as be included in future performance reporting and this was supported by the Committee. Another Member was pleased to note that Start Up Bromley had attracted 611 more members and further information on the number of service users would be provided to Members following the meeting. The Chairman queried the quality of internet provision at Bromley libraries following some recent outages and a representative of Greenwich Leisure Limited said that the rollout of dark fibre internet was anticipated to significantly improve the reliability of internet provision going forward.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be supported.

10 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

**A LIBRARY REPAIR WORKS PROGRAMME AND CROFTON
ROMAN VILLA UPDATE
Report HPR2024/020**

The report provided an update on the Library Repair Works Programme.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Regeneration explained that work was ongoing regarding the proposed relocation of Central Library to the Topshop Building on Bromley High Street and that a further report would be provided to the Committee at its meeting on 12 September 2024. Another Member observed that the total cost of the works was expected to be approximately £15.5M and asked whether a new build library would be cheaper. The Head of Regeneration said that any new-build library would require land and be subject to carbon offset funding which would add

significantly to the costs and that the approximate cost of £15.5M was the total project cost, including consultancy fees and the costs of moving library stock from the former Central Library site. The Member also asked about change control notices and the Assistant Director: Culture and Regeneration clarified that such notices that had a cost implication were solely used with respect to decisions that had already been agreed by the Council's Executive, including any related costings. Another Member asked about the temporary library at Lewis House, and a representative of Greenwich Leisure Ltd advised that a full range of services would be available to library users and that further information on the demographic of existing library users would be provided to Members following the meeting.

A Member asked about the programme of works at Crofton Roman Villa and the Head of Regeneration confirmed that it was planned to deliver a toilet provision on site in addition to other improvements. The Member requested that consideration be given to installing a notice board on the end elevation of the building and that planting be carefully planned as to not obscure signage.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

B UPDATE ON THE BROMLEY LOCAL PLAN REVIEW Report HPR2024/024

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the progress of the Local Plan review and the intention to undertake the review under the new plan-making system.

A Member underlined the need for the Local Plan to support the Local Authority in being ambitious around social housing. The Head of Planning Policy and Strategy confirmed that demand for social housing would form part of the evidence used to assess the level of housing need in the Borough, but that the Local Authority would also need to demonstrate that housing targets within the Local Plan were viable during the examination process. Another Member emphasised the importance of promoting increased accessibility of retail and commercial units, with particular reference to Beckenham High Street.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

C CONTRACTS REGISTER PART 1 (PUBLIC) REPORT Report HPR2024/026

The report presented an extract from the Contracts Register detailing contracts with a whole life value of £50k or higher as at 22 April 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Contracts Register be noted.

11 RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING INFORMATION BRIEFING

The items comprised:

- Digital Infrastructure Work Plan Update

RESOLVED: That the Information Briefing be noted.

PART 2 (CLOSED) AGENDA

12 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**

13 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 MARCH AND 17 APRIL 2024

The exempt minutes of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee meeting held on 14 March and 17 April 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

14 PART 2 (EXEMPT) POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

A CONTRACTS REGISTER PART 2 (EXEMPT) REPORT

The Committee considered a Part 2 (Exempt) extract from the Contracts Register.

The Meeting ended at 8.37 pm

Chairman

RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE 19 JUNE 2024

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN REPLY

1. From Sheila Brown on behalf of Bromley Friends of the Earth to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

What steps is Bromley Council taking to ensure that any development properly complies with the new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements? How has Bromley Council used Government funding provided to prepare for BNG? How much is it costing to use external consultants for advice and what would in-house expertise cost?

Reply: Like many local authorities, Bromley Council is taking steps to ensure that the recently introduced Biodiversity Net Gain requirements can be implemented effectively. This has included bespoke training for planning officers, funded using part of the DEFRA BNG grant funding. At this stage, the Council is confident that the BNG process will be managed effectively, in line with relevant requirements. The Council cannot commit to creating a specific post to cover BNG, as there are no existing resources to fund this; the Council is not alone in this regard, with recent evidence suggesting that 61% of local planning authorities across are not intending to employ specific biodiversity officers to assist with BNG implementation. The Council will consider the use of external consultants on a case-by-case basis, but this will likely only be necessary in particularly complex cases; to date, the Council has not utilised external consultants to assist with the statutory BNG requirements on specific applications.

2. From Ian Dunn, Local Resident to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

In relation to Item 7b: Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan Update - 2023/24 Q4 Update:

The Strategic Project Tracker shows the planning application for the Beckenham Triangle being submitted in June 24. Please clarify which date the application will be submitted and when you expect it to appear on the Planning Portal.

Reply: The planning application for this site will be submitted by the end of June. As soon as the Planning Authority have validated the application it will be available on the portal.

**RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE
19 JUNE 2024**

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

3. From Bill Miller, Local Resident and Chair of the Avalon Area Action Group to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

In relation to Item 9a: Proceeding to Procurement: Manorfields Transitional Accommodation:

Does the Committee agree there has been an oversight in conducting a consultation with local residents and clarifying whether existing side agreements on eligibility etc will be honoured and will the Committee correct this by holding a consultation in the local neighbourhood involving the Regeneration team, Bromley Housing, local residents and interested groups?

Reply: The proposals for Manorfields involve internal refurbishment and improvement works to the building only. At this stage proposals would not require a planning application for the works, and the only elements of planned works that may require a planning application is the installation of a substation if necessary. Works include rewiring, updates to the heating system, new windows/doors, roof repairs, installation of bathrooms and kitchens and the tidying of landscaped areas. There are no changes to how the site will be managed and the site will continue to operate in line with existing policies, procedures and practices. Local residents living nearby will see no change and therefore a public consultation was not required. Only where there are planned service changes is the Council obliged to consult with residents, such as the extensive engagement the Council has undertaken with regards to the Walnuts Leisure Centre.

However, on this occasion, officers will be happy to hold a meeting to share proposals with residents if the funding is granted and approved if this is something that residents would like.

Supplementary Question: At what stage will the proposals for Manorfields be shared with local neighbours?

Reply: Local Authority Officers will make arrangements for a meeting with local residents once funding for the project has been confirmed.