

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 23 June 2014

### **Present:**

Councillor Ian F. Payne (Chairman)  
Councillor Peter Dean (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Douglas Auld, Nicky Dykes, Alexa Michael,  
Neil Reddin FCCA, Michael Rutherford, Michael Tickner and  
Angela Wilkins

Precious Adewunmi

### **Also Present:**

Councillor Eric Bosshard, Councillor Peter Morgan and Councillor  
Charles Rideout CVO, QPM

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the first meeting of the 2014/15 Municipal Year. A special welcome was extended to new Members Councillors Rutherford and Wilkins and to Miss Precious Adewunmi, the new Bromley Youth Council representative.

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

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Rutherford.

### **2 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER**

#### **Report CSD14074**

Members considered a nomination put forward by the Bromley Youth Council for one of its members, Miss Precious Adewunmi, to attend Renewal and Recreation PDS meetings as a non-voting co-opted Member for the consideration of public reports only.

**RESOLVED that Miss Precious Adewunmi be appointed to the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee as a non-voting Co-opted Member for the current 2014/15 Municipal Year.**

### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Payne declared personal interests in Items 9 (Town Centre Management Update Report) and 10 (Town Centres Development Programme Update) as he was:-

- Manager of the Bexleyheath Business Improvement District (BID);
- a member of the British BIDS;
- an Advisory Board Member of the Association of Town and City Managers;  
and
- an Executive Member of The Salvation Army.

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

### **5 QUESTIONS FOR THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

No questions were received.

### **6 QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE**

No questions were received.

### **7 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2014**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2014 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

### **8 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES AND UPDATES**

#### **Report CSD14077**

Proposals for the use of funds for the Biggin Hill Heritage Centre were currently being developed. Members were advised that it was the intention to table a report at the next R&R PDS meeting on 2 September 2014 before moving on for consideration by Members of the Executive subject to the outcome of current discussions.

Officers were awaiting the outcome of a full condition survey on Anerley Town Hall. Upon receipt of this, a detailed report would be submitted for consideration by Members of the Executive in September 2014.

It was anticipated that Anerley Library would close during the first week of August 2014 and the new library would be opened towards the end of August.

The Council was meeting with Mytime officers to discuss the current financial situation and to establish an appropriate way forward. Mytime's new Chief Executive would take up her position in September 2014. Mytime had failed to provide the previously requested figures for the revised Investment Fund five year spending proposals however, this had been overtaken by current events.

Referring to the previous Minutes (Min 77 - 01.04.14), the Assistant Director of Leisure and Culture agreed to check that details of the reason for the sharp decrease in the number of appeals submitted, had been circulated to Members.

**Members noted the position with regard to matters arising from previous meetings.**

## **9 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

### **9a BUDGET MONITORING (R&R)**

#### **Report FSD14035**

Members considered the latest budget monitoring position for 2014/15 based on expenditure and activity levels up to 31 May 2014. The total portfolio budget showed a projected overspend of £258k.

**RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the latest 2014/15 budget projection for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio**

### **9b PROVISIONAL OUTTURN (R&R)**

#### **Report DRR14036**

Members considered the 2013/14 provisional outturn position for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio which showed an underspend of £224k and represented a 2.55% variation against the controllable budget of £8.785m. This compared with a projected variation of Cr £96k.

Members also considered the level of expenditure for projects within the Member Priority Initiatives.

Approval was sought for the drawdown of the carry forward sums of £60k and £22.5k held in central contingency, to be used to fund the preparation of the Borough's Local Plan and the Business Support Scheme.

The Head of Finance confirmed that 20% of Building Control staff time/activities could not be charged for and therefore was categorised within the non-chargeable part of the service. For example, this type of work included the provision of general advice by telephone, the first hour of officers' time in giving pre-building regulation application advice and dealing with dangerous buildings.

Councillor Tickner referred to the provision of £90k to meet the costs of a potential claim against the Council for repairs in respect of an application to fell a protected tree where permission had been refused (paragraph 5.5). He considered the Council had a duty to protect trees and in this respect, provision should not be made for every application. Members were informed that this was the same tree referred to in previous reports and officers had been advised by legal representatives to set aside the stated sum in the event that the insurers won their case.

Referring to the costs of £100k as a direct result of losing planning appeals (paragraph 5.6), Councillor Rutherford enquired how this compared with previous figures and with those of other Councils. It was agreed that a detailed report concerning planning appeals would be submitted to the R&R PDS meeting in September 2014.

It was confirmed that the net shortfall in income of £21k, mainly from library fines (paragraph 5.7), was partly attributed to the ease with which books could be renewed on line and the fact that people were borrowing less.

A Government grant of £22.5k was allocated for a Business Support Scheme (paragraphs 5.12-5.14) set up to assist businesses affected by the previous winter floods to recoup uninsured costs. As the funding had been announced late in the financial year, monies were only now being released to claimants. A further update would be given at the September PDS meeting.

**RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:-**

- 1) endorse the 2013/14 provisional outturn for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio;**
- 2) note the expenditure for the Renewal and Recreation projects within the Member Priority Initiatives; and**
- 3) approve the drawdown of the carry forward sums of £60k and £22.5k held in central contingency, to be used to fund the preparation of the Borough's Local Plan and the Business Support Scheme.**

## **9c BROMLEY LIBRARY SERVICE - OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

### **Report DRR14/054**

Members considered the results of the staff and library user consultation that had been undertaken since the R&R PDS meeting held in April 2014. In response to the outcome of the consultation, the report made a number of recommendations to achieve the necessary budget savings for 2014/15.

To maintain an effective service within the reduced operating hours and staff hours, it was necessary to install Radio Frequency Identification Data (RFID) equipment in all of the borough's libraries at a cost of £275,000 to enable full customer self-service.

Staff Side Secretary, Mr Glenn Kelly addressed the Committee. Mr Kelly stated that despite the fact that 2,000 people signed a submitted petition requesting that the proposals be dropped, their pleas had gone unheard. The current proposals before Members had not differed from those previously considered. A proposed total of 306 working hours would be deleted from front line posts. Mr Kelly alluded to the survey carried out which at no time asked the public if they were against the proposed cuts. Referring to the closure of the mobile library, it was noted that 43% of the public interviewed claimed that this service was their sole means of access to books. Of that 43%, nearly 50% used the service on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Whilst staff were concerned about their future and possible cuts to their salaries, the Authority was prepared to spend £275k on installing IT equipment in all libraries and was prepared to set aside a further amount of money for future maintenance work.

In summing up, Mr Kelly urged Members not to accept the recommendations in the report and speaking on behalf of staff and public users, requested that the proposals be dropped.

The Chairman made the following statement:-

'I want to commend officers for an excellent report on this controversial subject. Approximately 400 libraries in the UK have been closed - not a reduction in hours, but closed.

This Authority is required to save over £5.2m in the next financial year which is a major challenge to every department in the Council; doing nothing is not an option and what we are doing now is not an option.

Over past years, the Authority has undertaken a number of consultations, surveys and public opinion to look at libraries in detail, hours, numbers attending and purpose of visit.

At my last meeting on 1 April 2014, I asked all assembled to contact me about their concerns. Out of the 20+ who attended that meeting, only one made contact with me, for which I was grateful.

We are in austere times and decisions have to be made but as I have said numerous times, this is a great opportunity to review our libraries. What could we offer better, how can we engage with the public better and not lose a service but enhance that service with a wider remit. How can we work smarter, use local resources, provide a hub that not only has books but many other offers. It is a time to move on and step up our game. So, thank you to those who have engaged in such a positive way and for those who have challenged myself and the Portfolio Holder, asking those questions and making constructive comments, it has been very useful and helpful in the overall decision that has to be made - changing hours but NOT closing libraries.'

Ms Liz Keable addressed Members on behalf of Mottingham Residents' Association. Whilst it was understood that cuts were necessary, the proposed 3 pm closure of Mottingham Library on Wednesday afternoons would save very little, if any, expenditure. Footfall at the library was 60% higher in comparison with Shortlands Library. As a small community, the library was highly valued, used by the elderly and school students alike and was also used as a social hub. In light of the above, Ms Keable requested that the opening hours for Wednesday afternoons be extended to 5.30 pm. An e-mail from a student at Dorset Road School was read to Members. The student, who suffered with a language disorder, regularly visited the library and commended staff who had helped him "ignite a passion" to continue with his reading. He supported Ms Keable's request for extra opening time on Wednesdays.

The Chairman commented that Ms Keable's representations underlined the fact that Mottingham Library was a community hub and would continue to be so. Councillor Tickner referred to the library's isolated position near the Ward boundary and in this regard, he supported Ms Keable's request. The Head of Leisure and Culture informed Members that the current proposals provided a balanced budget to meet necessary cuts. Preferred Option B already included an extra hour which had been reallocated following previous consideration.

The Chairman confirmed that comments received after the last PDS meeting would be considered. He suggested that volunteer staff could be used to cover any additional opening hours.

Having taken into account Ms Keable's request, Members agreed that the current proposals should be accepted as they stand, with the proviso that the operating hours at Mottingham Library be reviewed in six months' time.

Councillor Michael commented that she was proud of library staff and the work they carried out. It should be seen as an achievement that there had not

been a single library closure within the Borough. Councillor Michael noted that the report did not reflect the results of the interviews carried out at Beckenham Library with regard to opening and closing hours, in which the largest number of respondees had preferred Option C.

It was reported that in response to the question of whether the Council's proposal for reducing opening hours would inconvenience users in any way, the vast majority of people interviewed had responded "no". In this regard, the Council thought it prudent to go with the option that caused the least inconvenience.

Discussion took place around the best way to promote current library services and inform the public of the changes that would take place. Officers would work with the Council's Communication Department in this regard.

Councillor Dean voiced his concern at the termination of the Mobile Library Service and emphasised the need to heavily promote the voluntary organisation which had agreed to deliver to housebound residents and in particular, existing users.

Members praised the excellence of library staff and gave assurances that officers would work closely with them and service users to ensure there was as little disruption as possible during implementation of the proposals. There were currently 9½ full time vacancies within the library service with 10 full time equivalent posts being affected by the proposals. The Council would try to avoid seeking compulsory redundancies.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- 1) the content of the report, including the outcome of the staff and library user consultation, be noted;**
- 2) the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree the changes as set out in the report and, in particular:-**
  - a) the changes to library operating hours (with the proviso that the hours of operation at Mottingham Library be reviewed in six months' time); and**
  - b) the deletion of the mobile library service.**
- 3) the Portfolio Holder be recommended to request that the Executive agree the one-off funding of £275k for the purchase and installation of RFID equipment, to ensure that the full £300k savings are realised within 12 months of installation.**

## **9d INITIAL ASSESSMENT FOR WAR MEMORIAL REFURBISHMENT**

### **Report DRR14/059**

Members considered the initial results of the condition survey undertaken on the 19 war memorials over which the Council had responsibility.

The report provided details on the budget for the estimated works and set out a programme in order to have refurbishment completed by November 2014 in time for the 100 year commemoration of the start of World War I.

With regard to the request from local Ward Councillors to have the name plaques at Penge War Memorial replaced in cast bronze, it was reported that of the original four plaques, two had been stolen and therefore the replacements would need to be like for like to match the remaining two. Permanent securing of the replacement plaques was of the utmost importance.

It was suggested that insurance cover be sought for the Borough's War Memorials however, it was considered that the excess charged was likely to be too high for this to be feasible

It was agreed that officers would look into the possibility of seeking criminal awards and obtaining insurance cover. An update on this would be circulated via e-mail to Members.

It was anticipated that all minor works in Phase 1 would be completed by 4 August 2014, in time for the 100 year commemoration of the start of World War I.

**RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to note the results of the initial assessment works and agree the first and second phases of the programme of refurbishment.**

## **10 RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO BUSINESS PLAN**

### **Report DRR14/062**

Members considered the Renewal and Recreation Business Plan 2013/14 Monitoring Report for Quarter 4.

The report outlined progress made towards the delivery of actions agreed in the Plan for Quarter 4 and against all actions for the year 2013/14.

As some information was duplicated in other reports to Committee, the Chairman requested that Members e-mail him with any suggestions they may have as to how the actions delivered and identified could be better scrutinised at future meetings.

Referring to Aim 2b (page 28), Councillor Michael was disappointed and concerned to note that the determination of minor applications had continued to fall behind target and questioned the reason for this as it appeared that determination of other types of application had improved. It was agreed that the Chief Planner would be requested to circulate an updating statement in this respect.

The huge increase in applications received, together with a cutback on staff, had contributed to the continuing problems. Staffing issues were being addressed but this would take time. It was confirmed that the delays in determining minor applications had not led to an increase in appeals. To ease current pressures, Councillor Tickner suggested contracting self-employed town planners on a fixed basis. The lack of communication from planning officers was also alluded to. It was agreed that a comprehensive report concerning minor applications and the current staffing position be submitted to the next PDS and DCC meetings and the Chief Planner be requested to attend.

The Chairman noted that £173k from Sport England's Community Sports Activation Fund had been awarded to Pro-Active Bromley to work with clubs and community groups to increase and sustain participation in sport for people over 14. Officers agreed to circulate a detailed briefing paper outlining how the award had been utilised in each ward.

Discussions were continuing around restoration and development proposals for Bromley Museum. Details of this would be reported to Members at a future PDS meeting.

With reference to Aim 4b (page 36), Members requested an update on the number of homeless people/families currently within each Ward together with information on the location of each of the five properties acquired by the Council

Aim 1e (page 47) referred to the production of Growth and Delivery Plans for the Borough's strategic employment sites in Biggin Hill, Cray Valley and Bromley Town Centre. The Chairman asked that detailed reports for individual areas be submitted to future meetings outlining the work undertaken in this respect.

Aim 3d referred to the project by Bromley College on behalf of the Council to support young unemployed residents with sustainable employment opportunities through the creation of apprenticeships and internships. Unfortunately, the College had misjudged admission figures and although the apprenticeships programme had been successful, internships had not been delivered. The contract with Bromley College had now been terminated and the Working Group would review the scheme and report back to a future meeting of the Committee. Councillor Bosshard supported the Council's commitment to supporting young people into employment but emphasised the importance of ensuring correct delivery of the scheme in order to achieve success.

Members were informed that a feasibility review on the potential for a Heritage Centre at Biggin Hill Airport would be undertaken. The Biggin Hill Working Group would reconvene to consider proposals and a report would be submitted to the PDS meeting in September.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted and the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:-**

- 1) note the progress made towards the delivery of actions agreed in the Renewal and Recreation Business Plan 2013/14 for Quarter 4 as described in the Monitoring Report;**
- 2) note the progress made against all actions in the Renewal and Recreation Business Plan 2013/14 across the year as described in the Summary Report; and**
- 3) agree the draft Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Business Plan 2014/15 subject to any amendments or additions.**

## **11 TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT - JUNE 2014**

### **Report DRR14/007**

Members received an update on activities undertaken by the Council's Town Centre Management and Business Support Team up to April 2014. The report also summarised priorities for the period until the end of September 2014.

In particular, Members considered a draft 'Spatial Management Strategy for Bromley Town Centre'. This provided an outline of what sort of activities would be encouraged by Town Centre Management, working alongside colleagues in Streetscene Services and how those activities would be managed once the improvement works were completed in the pedestrianised area of Market Square.

Commenting on the percentage figures for the number of vacant retail units in the Borough, Councillor Michael considered it interesting to note that Penge had the lowest percentage of vacancies whilst Orpington had the highest. It was anticipated that regeneration of The Walnuts at Orpington would have a significant positive impact on vacancy rates.

Councillor Michael asked when the new planters and flower tower for Keston would be delivered. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support would be asked to respond to Councillor Michael via e-mail.

An updating report on the success of the Bromley Means Business event would be submitted to the PDS meeting in September 2014.

Councillor Rutherford asked what was being done to clean the street surfacing in the Bromley North/East Street area. Members were informed that officers were working with environment colleagues to initiate an enhanced street cleaning regime using a gum-busting treatment. Leaking refuse bins would also be replaced. Should the proposal for a Bromley BID prove successful, future responsibility for undertaking this work could fall within the BID's remit.

At the suggestion of Councillor Morgan, a proposal to request further funding to support various improvement projects at local parades would be submitted to a meeting of the Executive Committee.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- 1) the key developments and activities within the Town Centre Management and Business Support Team (as summarised in Appendix 1 of the report), be noted; and**
- 2) the draft spatial management plan for Bromley Town Centre pedestrianised area (as set out in Appendix 2 of the report), be noted.**

**12 TOWN CENTRES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

**Report DRR14/058**

Members considered the progress achieved in delivering the Town Centres Development Programme.

Members were encouraged to attend a special meeting of the Executive to be held on 22 July 2014 to pre-scrutinise jointly with E&R PDS Members, a part 2 confidential report on proposals for Churchill Place (Site G in the Area Action Plan).

As Chairman of the Beckenham Town Centre Working Party, Councillor Tickner reported architects were currently working on plans for the design and development stage of the Town Centre Improvement Scheme. A detailed report would be submitted to the September meeting of the PDS Committee.

Councillor Tickner asked when the redesign of traffic lights at Beckenham Junction would be completed and the work undertaken. He was informed that funding was in place however, TfL were still waiting for approval from the utility company to move existing plant. It was anticipated that if nothing was heard by the end of the week, a letter from the Chairman to the utility company may assist in this respect. The Head of Renewal agreed to contact the Chairman and Councillor Tickner to provide an update.

**RESOLVED that the progress on the delivery of the Town Centres Development Programme be noted.**

**13 RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE WORK  
PROGRAMME (OCTOBER 2014-MAY 2015)**

**Report CSD14078**

Members considered the Committee's work programme for the period October 2014-May 2015.

It was agreed that the following reports be submitted to future meetings of the PDS:-

- Review of the Library Service - March 2015; and
- Arts in Bromley - to update members on plans for The Royal Bell. It was suggested that this could be included in the forthcoming report on proposals for Site G - Churchill Theatre.

Members suggested future visits and tours to places of interest such as the Churchill Theatre, Libraries, The Study Centre and leisure centres. A visit to the Churchill Theatre could be arranged to coincide with the submission of the report on Site G.

It was also suggested that consideration should be given at some stage to resolve issues around the lack of parking spaces within the Borough.

**RESOLVED that the work programme for the period October 2014-May 2015, be agreed.**

The meeting ended at 8.57 pm

Chairman