

RENEWAL AND RECREATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 18 November 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

Also Present:

Councillor Katy Boughey, Councillor Stephen Carr, Councillor Peter Morgan
and Councillor Charles Rideout CVO, QPM

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Tickner and an apology for absence was received from the Bromley Youth Council Co-opted Member, Miss Precious Adewunmi.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Payne declared personal interests in Item 8 (Town Centre Management Update Report), Item 9 (Town Centres Development Programme Update) and Item 17 (Bromley Town Centre: Revised Development Strategy, 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.

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

41 QUESTIONS FOR THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A written question was received from Mr John Getgood, Chair of Penge Forum. A copy of the question, together with the Portfolio Holder's response is attached as Appendix 1.

42 QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE

No questions were received.

43 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2014

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2014 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

44 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES AND UPDATES

Report CSD14137

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting held on 2 September 2014.

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

45 RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (JANUARY-MARCH 2015)

Report CSD14108

Members considered the Committee's work programme for the period January-March 2015 and requested that a report on the outcome of consultation on the future management of the borough's library service be submitted to the R&R PDS Committee in March 2015.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendments, the work programme for the period January-March 2015 be agreed.

46 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO REPORTS

46a BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15

Report FSD14073

Members considered the latest budget monitoring position for 2014/15 based on expenditure and activity levels up to 30 September 2014. The total portfolio budget showed a projected overspend of £69k.

Members also considered the level of expenditure and progress with the implementation of the selected projects within the Member Priority Initiatives.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the latest 2014/15 budget projection for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio; and**
- 2) The progress of the implementation of the Renewal and Recreation projects within the Member Priority Initiatives be noted.**

46b LIBRARY SERVICE STRATEGY

Report DRR14/090

A recent library review had resulted in the closure of the Mobile Library and the merger of Penge and Anerley Libraries. Bromley Libraries opening hours were also reduced from 605 to 527.5 per week.

Due to the continued financial constraints faced by the Council, it was necessary for consideration to be given to the most cost-effective and efficient way of managing the borough's library service going forward.

The report considered by Members outlined the strategy for taking the Library Service forward post completion of the baseline opening hours work stream. It also set out the detail behind the strategy which was underpinned by the development of community managed libraries and the exposure of the core library offer to the market for market testing.

Ms Liz Keable addressed Members on behalf of Mottingham Residents' Association and made the following representations:-

'Firstly, why should a '*strategic*' review involve the separation of Community Libraries from the mainstream library service?

Secondly, why, in order to save £250K, should such a disruptive exercise be undertaken? This is 8fte staff from a complement of 111 which is 7%. Visits to Community Libraries make up more than 11% of the total visits for Bromley each year.

I visited Grove Park Library, one of 5 community libraries, run by ECO computers, on behalf of Lewisham. ECO will run the library and community centre at Slade Green, for Bexley, following redevelopment.

ECO has one employee, on the minimum wage, running all 5. She has no library experience or training beyond induction. One volunteer has a Health and Safety certificate, but is not always there. Whilst I was there, the child of a volunteer went into the kitchen of the refreshment area, opened the fridge door and hit his head on the servery.

The library looked like a boot fair with the emphasis on fundraising. This included recycling old computers and electrical equipment, table and jumble sales, raffles, and charging for activities run by amateur volunteers.

Volunteers included a few local, retired people such as an electrician who rewired the lights when they didn't work HELP! and a lady who runs a knitting circle. Most were referred by the local job centre or were on employment training courses and required to undertake unpaid work.

Only once were books even mentioned. That was in the context of the importance of scanning returns immediately, as overdue notices are automatically sent out and people complain. I urge Councillors and Officers to visit and assess this provision.

Over the past couple of years, I have taken the trouble to read the library legislation and the challenges resulting from non-compliance. There is absolutely no way in which this sort of arrangement meets the legal criteria.

Bromley, rightly, prides itself on the high quality of its services. The library service is highly valued, and, in the smaller communities, is the only face of Bromley Council. Separating out the Community Libraries and leaving them to fend for themselves will lead to the loss of professional leadership, high quality help, advice and activities, and, ultimately, to closure.

Will you please think again? Spend £5K on a report on efficiency savings, rather than legal advice on a proposal which you must already have concerns about. Work with the community to retain Community Libraries within the professional management of the whole service whether in-house or outsourced.'

The Chairman assured Ms Keable that residents' concerns would be considered however, it still remained necessary to save money and in this

respect the Council needed to identify the best way in which it could continue to support libraries and save community hubs. The Council wanted to achieve a positive outcome and would examine what was good practice in other boroughs. Nationally, a great deal of money was invested in volunteer services which were vital to local communities.

It was confirmed that no libraries would close as a result of the review. The Chairman encouraged residents to e-mail comments to him and asked for their patience and forbearance whilst the review was being undertaken.

Councillor Michael echoed the Chairman's comments and referred to the Chart on page 39 of the report which showed the number of visits to libraries in the past 10 years had remained constant although the number of library issues had decreased; this showed that the role of the service was evolving. A significant proportion of people were utilising libraries for purposes other than borrowing books. 25% of the borough's residents did not own a home computer so the provision of library IT services was extremely useful. Councillor Michael was pleased to note that RFID (self-service technology), would be rolled out to all the borough's libraries by the end of the year.

With reference to the chart on page 39 of the report, It was agreed that figures for individual libraries would be circulated to Members.

Councillor Reddin emphasised the importance of the review and stated that Ms Keable's account of the external management of the library at Grove Park was not indicative of how all of Bromley's libraries would be managed. The role of local communities and volunteers was vital in maintaining the provision of library services.

Councillor Payne had visited a new build community library and was impressed with how it worked and the opportunities available to develop it and move forward.

Councillor Wilkins referred to what she considered to be the rapid closure of Anerley Town Hall and its replacement as a community library and asked if the review process included an appropriate amount of time to consult with staff. She emphasised the need for user groups to be involved throughout the review. It was confirmed that a three month consultation period would be undertaken with both users and non-users with focus meetings being held periodically. Staff would be engaged in consultation and at some point would be formally consulted. It would take approximately one year to create community libraries following which, the aim was to outsource the management of services by 2017. A report on the outcome of the consultation would be submitted to the R&R PDS meeting in March 2015.

It was reported that the Council had invested in three new libraries to date. Both the new Orpington and Biggin Hill libraries had proved to be very successful and the recently established library at Penge had seen an improvement upon the former Penge and Anerley library.

It was confirmed that the standard length of time had been set aside to seek expressions of interest in community-run libraries for which a significant amount of publicity was anticipated. Marketing of library services was undertaken mainly on-line via social media such as Facebook and Twitter but were also publicised at social functions i.e. local festivals. Activities within local communities were promoted by Outreach staff. A preserved book fund of £500k would be set aside.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree the strategic approach as set out in the report, namely:-**
 - **the development of community managed libraries; and**
 - **market testing the core library offer.**
- 3) the Portfolio Holder be recommended to authorise officers to formally consult with library users and staff on the proposals and the outcome of the consultation be reported back to a meeting of the Committee in March 2015;**

46c REVIEW OF BROMLEY TOWN CENTRE MARKETS

Report DRR14/103

As requested by PDS Members in September 2014, a review of the current operation of the Bromley town centre market had been undertaken and proposals concerning its future development were submitted for consideration.

The report also requested the drawdown of some initial seed funding to assist with development, planning and design costs.

Referring to the initial assessment of the potential for the newly refurbished space in Market Square (page 60, paragraph 3.11) and the suggestion that 40 units could be accommodated there, Councillor Reddin requested consideration be given to quality as opposed to quantity.

Councillor Dykes was assured that a design agency would be selected according to its market design experience and the resulting scheme would be sympathetic to the surroundings and retain all heritage assets. Market traders would be consulted throughout the process.

In relation to the chart on page 58 of the report which showed the average number of visitors to Bromley per week, it was agreed that the figure for November 2013 would be circulated to Members.

Councillor Rutherford commended officers for continuing to involve Members throughout the review.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to authorise the drawdown of up to £25k from a Section 106 Agreement which earmarked £50k for Town Centre improvements to assist with development, planning and design costs in support of proposed changes.

46d MYTIME ACTIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

Report DRR14/096

In accordance with contractual arrangements between the Council and Mytime at the point of transfer of the services and the updated agreement dated 1 November 2011, Mytime submitted its Annual Report for 2013/14 for Member consideration.

The report outlined Mytime's achievements for the year and previewed its future spending proposals for 2015/16. In particular, Members were asked to consider the release of £330k from the Investment Fund to upgrade facilities at the Beckenham Spa.

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to Dennis Barkway, Marg Mayne, Deborah Weekes and Matthew Roberts, representatives from Mytime Active. The Mytime Active representatives were commended for producing an excellent and informative report, full of 'good news' stories but were questioned about the lack of financial information on investment figures for Bromley.

Ms Mayne explained that Mytime worked in a commercially sensitive environment. Profits were not distributed to shareholders but were carried forward to the following year for reinvestment purposes. Of the £31m income achieved last year, £29m was reinvested.

The healthcare cost for Bromley was significant so the benefit of activity was important. It was reported that 24% of people in Bromley undertook less than 30 minutes exercise per week and 1 in 4 people did even less. Special value was also placed on sport and other activities which helped to build a strong fabric of community.

The Primetime programme focussed on providing facilities for older people. The following changes had been implemented in order to meet community need:-

- A Primetime Manager and Co-ordinator had been employed to consult with older people and identify needs. Over 60 dedicated sessions had been held and attendance had increased ten-fold.

- New people had been recruited, trained and deployed as 'Primetime Buddies', the majority of whom were volunteers whose role was to 'meet and greet'.
- An annual social calendar of events had been introduced.

Mr Barkway explained that Mytime no longer operated joint facilities with schools, most of which had taken over sole responsibility. Mytime did, however, operate a before and after school club and also actively engaged with 59% of schools by offering swimming lessons.

Bromley Mytime had successfully engaged people in community activities with enthusiasm being shown once again this year for The London Youth Games. 800 people had already registered for this year's Santa Dash.

Investment-wise Mytime had achieved the following:-

- With regard to the Health and Well Being agenda, over 1000 people had been referred to Mytime via their GPs.
- A successful social impact - A programme or service for older men was currently being identified.
- Human capital - Mytime employed 1,200 staff which included work experience people, apprentices and volunteers.
- £350k was spent on equipment during the past year.
- £330k is proposed to be spent on expanding facilities at the Beckenham Spa from the Investment Fund.

Councillor Michael was impressed with the increase in attendance figures and supported the proposal to upgrade Beckenham Spa.

The Chairman commended Mytime for the grants provided by them and for the charity work they undertook throughout the year.

Mr Barkway alluded to an increase in competition within the Borough and the possibility that there may be difficult times ahead.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) the report be noted: and**
- 2) the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree the release of £330k from the Investment Fund to upgrade facilities at the Beckenham Spa.**

47 TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2014

Report DRR14/104

Members considered an update on Town Centre Management and business support activities which had taken place since the previous update in September 2014.

The Chairman noted forthcoming events and commended the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support for producing a good report.

Councillor Michael was pleased to note that the two large retail units fronting Market Square had now been occupied (page 105, paragraph 1.5).

RESOLVED that the key developments and activities within the Town Centre Management and Business Support Team be noted.

48 TOWN CENTRES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report DRR14/106

Members considered the progress achieved in delivering the Town Centres Development Programme and the findings of the Growth Study and proposed programme of action.

Endorsement was sought for the development of project proposal bids for the Mayor's High Street Fund which required submission to the GLA by 1 December 2014.

The Chairman commended the Renewal Team for the Council's successful outcome of its four bids for New Homes Bonus funding (page 116, paragraph 3.14).

Referring to the development of Site G (Churchill Place) (page 115, paragraph 3.2), Councillor Rutherford reported that he had been contacted by a number of residents living outside the new boundary of Site G who were finding it extremely difficult to sell their homes. He sought reassurance that there were no plans for further work to be carried out on the remainder of the site. Councillor Rutherford was informed that subject to the current proposals being approved at the Executive meeting to be held on 26 November 2014, a letter would be sent to residents inviting them to a public meeting to discuss future plans and address any concerns they may have. There are currently no plans to extend development on the site.

Members were advised that in the light of feedback received from CABE, Cathedral were currently revising their scheme proposals for Site C (Town Hall) (page 115, paragraph 3.2). It was anticipated that a revised planning application would be submitted by the end of November 2014.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) the delivery of the town Centres Development Programme be noted; and**
- 2) the development of project proposal bids for the Mayors' High Street Fund be endorsed and final sign off for any bid submissions be delegated to the Portfolio Holders for Renewal and Recreation and Resources, the Leader and the Director of Regeneration and Transformation.**

49 PLANNING SERVICE - PROGRESS WITH CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PLANNING APPLICATION PERFORMANCE

Report DRR14/100

In April 2013, the Development Control Committee endorsed a revised Outline Planning Improvement Plan as a framework for improvements to the Planning Service.

Members considered updates on improvements made to the Planning Division's telephone service to customers and on planning application performance.

The Chief Planner gave a presentation in relation to Customer Service Performance and reported the following:-

- A new telephone system had been installed and calls were now being dealt with efficiently.
- The volume of applications being dealt with had increased by 10%.
- 25% of the Development Control Team had been lost during June-September due to staff 'moving-on' or resigning. This however, was rectified by hiring six new members of staff who started in October-November.

More attention and improvement was needed in dealing with applications under delegated authority - 15% of applications were submitted to Committee and attempts were being made to reduce this level. The number of applications refused was 25% compared with the national average of 12%; this, however was due in part to the policy regime in Bromley, having to take into consideration Areas of Special Residential Character; Conservation Areas and the Green Belt area. Bromley's recent refusal rates were significantly higher than Bexley and Richmond Councils.

The Chief Planner confirmed that Bromley's maximum threshold of 3 dwelling units for applications to be decided under delegated authority was set in accordance with Bromley's Constitution which, if minded to do so, Members

could amend. Councillor Auld asked if a threshold figure of 5 or 6 units could be established to see if it would make any difference to the number of applications being submitted to Committee.

Improvements across the board were also being sought in regard to appeal costs against the Council. Councillor Auld stated that nearly 50% of applications were dismissed on appeal and was concerned about a lack of consistency between Inspectors as some appeals having been refused several times were then given approval at a later date. The Chief Planner confirmed that Inspectors do take into account previous appeal decisions where relevant to the latest proposal.

Councillor Dykes had received many complaints concerning a lack of contact and information from planning staff and the length of time taken for case officers to be assigned to individual applications.

Councillor Michael referred to the objectives set out in the Outline Planning Improvement Plan and stated there was still a long way to go. Targets were not being met in regard to both major and minor applications and Councillor Michael questioned the reason for this. The Chief Planner referred to the reasons in the report and in recent months the staff turnover.

Members were informed that a higher than average proportion of applications were submitted to Committee however, this was not solely because the application contained more than 3 dwellings. Any application could be contentious (i.e. loss of light or amenity) and the Chief Planner had every confidence that Members were well-placed to identify such applications and 'call' them in.

Councillor Morgan was surprised to note the high rate of refusal of applications and asked that the reason for this be investigated.

The Chief Planner reported that 56% of applications had been dismissed and 44% allowed upon appeal. The national average allowed upon appeal was approximately 35%.

RESOLVED that progress with customer service and planning application performance be noted.

50 PLANNING APPEALS - COSTS DECISIONS

Report DRR14/100

Members considered Appeal Cost Decisions for the financial years 2011-2015 and examined the recent patterns in cost awards for Planning Appeals.

RESOVLED that the pattern in cost awards be noted.

51 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

The Chairman moved that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business listed below as it was 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.

52 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION PDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2014

RESOLVED the exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2014 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

53 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION PORTFOLIO PART 2 (EXEMPT) REPORTS

54 WINTER FLOODS BUSINESS SUPPORT SCHEME - APPLICATION IN RESPECT OF 35 CROYDON ROAD, BR4 9HZ

Report DRR14/102

Members considered an update on the status of the Winter Floods Business Support Fund and in particular, an application received in respect of 35 Croydon Road, West Wickham.

Members noted the report and supported the recommendation.

55 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS - PART 2 (EXEMPT)

56 BROMLEY TOWN CENTRE: REVISED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Report DRR14/105

The report contained information relating to the revised development and strategy programme for Bromley Town Centre.

Members noted the report and supported the recommendations to be considered by the Executive.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

Chairman