

**Executive & Resources PDS Committee: 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015  
Updates from PDS Chairmen**

**Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**Budget Monitoring 2014/15**

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.

**Library service Strategy**

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.

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.

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.

**Review of Bromley Town Centre Markets**

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.

## **MyTime Active Annual Report 2013/14**

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.

Ms Mayne (CEO) 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.

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.

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.

## **Town Centres Development Programme Update**

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

## **Planning Service – Progress with Customer Service and Planning Application Performance**

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. Improvements across the board were also being sought in regard to appeal costs against the Council. It was 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.

It was commented that 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.

Comment was made 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, this was questioned. 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%.

**Councillor Ian Payne,  
Chairman, Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee**

### **Public Protection & Safety PDS Committee - 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014**

1. The third meeting of the Public Protection & Safety PDS Committee for the municipal year 2014/2015 was held on the 2nd December 2014.

2. The Police Update was provided by the Deputy Borough Commander, Superintendent Parm Sandhu. The statistical data relating to MOPAC 7 targets was positive. Overall crime was down, and theft and burglary crime figures had reduced. There was however an increase in the number of crimes with injury; non-domestic abuse was up by 23%, and domestic abuse had increased by 15%. It was noted that there had been a change in the way that offences against the person were being classified, partially explaining the increase.

The Committee was advised that Operation Equinox was currently ongoing. This was an operation to reduce the number of crimes involving injury, and was concentrated in Beckenham Town Centre. Operation Bumble Bee was also ongoing which is an initiative to reduce burglary.

Current police staffing levels in Bromley were 486, compared with a recommended level of the 459 under the Local Policing Model.

Bromley Police were now using body worn video equipment which had resulted in a 30% increase in guilty pleas, which was the highest increase in the Met.

3. The Portfolio Holder gave an update to the Committee on a number of matters, which included the installation of 3 CCTV cameras covering the alleyway between the Odeon Bromley and the Hill Car Park, new initiatives to tackle fly tipping, informing the Committee on the recent gang activities in Bromley, and the recent Peer Gang Review by the Ministry of Justice.

4. Paul Lehane, Head of Service for Food, Licensing, Safety and Emergency Planning gave a presentation on his team's area of work for the benefit of the new members on the Committee.

5. The latest budget monitoring position for 2014/2015 for the PP&S PDS based on the expenditure and activity levels up to 30th September 2014 shows an underspend of £35k.

6. The Youth Programme Manager Jan Smith updated on the Summer Diversionary Activities 2014. These were a great success overall, although there was a two week period when the programme was affected adversely by wet weather. The Committee was pleased that the proportion of older children had increased since last year, and that Youth Services would be looking at ways of increasing partnership working, reducing costs, and generating revenue going forward.

7. It was discussed that a joint meeting would be planned with the Education PDS Committee on the 3rd February 2015 to examine the proposed merger of Youth Services, the Youth Offending Team and the Bromley Education Business Partnership.

8. The Committee had an enjoyable visit to the Police Dog Training Centre in Keston in November. Visits are being planned to the new Fire Station at Orpington in the new year, as well as a visit to the Emergency Planning Centre in Merton in February.

**Councillor Kate Lymer**  
**Chairman, Public Protection and Safety PDS Committee**