

Chairman's Annual Report for the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee

Chairman: Councillor Ian F Payne
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Peter Dean

1. Introduction

The Committee will have met 5 times this municipal year. Each meeting has scrutinised the reports for decision by the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder and considered policy development of key areas of the Portfolio. Alongside the elected Members on the PDS Committee we were also pleased to welcome a co-opted member from the Bromley Youth Council, Precious Adewunmi.

The Committee have monitored performance against the Renewal and Recreation Department's Building a Better Bromley priorities, namely

- Vibrant, thriving town centres
- Protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment
- Enhanced opportunities for leisure, recreation and the arts, and employment and skills

Areas that the PDS Scrutiny Committee have focused on are:

2. A new approach for Bromley Museum

As part of the £60 million savings required to be made within the next four years, the Executive Committee at its meeting on 14 January 2015, had identified the museum service as a budget cut for 2015/16. In this respect, R&R PDS Members considered a new approach to providing an improved quality heritage offer for residents, without an ongoing revenue requirement. Accommodating the Museum at Central Library which was situated in a good central location and provided disabled access, would attract more footfall to Bromley town centre.

After rationalisation, it was important to ensure that as many items as possible were accessible to view. One possible solution was to display some artefacts and paintings in houses and buildings open to the public, as well as in schools and other libraries. The Chairman confirmed that the Lubbock Gallery would display more artefacts from the Lubbock collection than are currently on display in the Avebury Gallery at the Priory.

Members were informed that some of the 20,000 objects and paintings should not have been acquired as they were irrelevant to the local history of the Borough and in this respect, a rationalisation process would be undertaken. A working group comprising the Council and volunteers from local history organisations is being formalised, to liaise on setting up mini displays for the new Museum. The proposals considered by Members were the start of a brand new and exciting chapter for Bromley Museum.

3. The future of Anerley Town Hall

Members considered a report which outlined the current position at Anerley Town Hall and identified options for its future. The business aspect at the centre was not currently vibrant with occupancy in late November 2014 being recorded at 64%. Two rooms were unrentable due to underpinning issues and there were problems in resolving the subsidence issues. No wi-fi was installed (a must for modern-day business). There had been no rent increase since 2008. If funding could be obtained, there was huge potential to build a bigger and better business centre. With so many young people in the Borough, it made sense for the Council to consider this matter further.

In considering the options put forward, it was noted that if a 40 year lease was granted it would be the responsibility of the Crystal Palace Park Trust to market and develop the Centre and would give it time and opportunity to expand and grow. This was the preferred option chosen.

4. Library Service Strategy

A 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.

5. 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.

It was resolved that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to authorise the drawdown of funds from a Section 106 Agreement earmarked for Town Centre improvements to assist with development, planning and design costs in support of proposed changes.

6. Town Centre Development and Planning

Site A: Bromley North

Ongoing working with the Council to prepare, publish, consult upon and promote a new policy for the OSA site. It is proposed that this be dealt with in the forthcoming

Local Plan, as it is at an appropriate stage of development. Work had now been completed on the planned public realm improvements to Bromley North Village.

Site B: Tweedy Rd

The site is remains being used as a (temporary) compound for storing materials and plant relating to Bromley North Village for a two year period.

Site C: Town Hall

Site allocated for a development comprising Hotel. Planning has now been submitted with the Council based on their proposal to convert the Town Hall to a hotel, conference centre and associated restaurants. They aim to open the hotel and conference centre in the Spring of 2016.

Site G: West of High Street

Major site in the AAP, officers are continuing to work with Developments on agreeing a viable scheme proposal and partnering arrangements that will deliver the Council's objectives.

Site K: Westmoreland Road car park

The proposal that Cathedral Group, as the developer, are working with includes a multi-screen cinema, 200 residential units, 130 bedroom hotel, restaurants and cafes, plus associated parking and public realm enhancements. Work is progressing in accordance with the programme plan and is due for completion by Autumn 2015.

Site L: Former DHSS

Telereal Trillium, the owners of the Crown Buildings have sold the site to the Education Funding Agency. The EFA are proposing to use the site to house a 3 form entry bi-lingual (French) primary school commencing in September 2014 as part of the Harris Academy Group.

7. Economic Development

With the Government financial incentives impacting on the way Local Government will be funded in the future. It has introduced reforms to the collection and spending of business rates, with a focus on local retention (30%) to incentivise local authorities to financially bolster their economy and business rates base. In response to this and wider Planning issues the Council has aimed both at creating employment and economic growth in three growth areas, which are Bromley Town Centre, Biggin Hill and the Cray Business Corridor. The Homes Bonus for 2014/15 would total £1.74m for the Borough and would be used to fund projects for Penge Town Centre/Crystal Palace, place making at the Walnuts Centre and Orpington business enabling and support, Biggin Hill Aviation Technology and Enterprise Centre, and Lagoon Road Industrial Estate redevelopment.

8. Orpington Town Centre

The owners of the Walnuts are on track to implement a comprehensive improvement programme for the Walnuts Shopping Centre which will see Crown Buildings redeveloped for additional retail floorspace and a cinema. The ballot of Business Rate payers to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for Orpington town centre had been successful.

9. The Priory

A number of surveys and investigations (including a full condition survey) revealed that there were a number of backlog maintenance issues affecting the total project cost of the work. As a result, project work has been delayed to enable a full range of options for the future of the Priory site to be considered and the business case for each of these to be reviewed so that a fully informed decision may be given full and proper consideration.

10. Beckenham

Officers have been working on implementation of short term improvements to Beckenham Town Centre following the recommendations agreed by the Beckenham & West Wickham PDS Working Group. Funding has been successful to now commence a plan of improvements.

An update on the proposed Beckenham Town Centre Conservation Area Summary was considered. The Group heard that a consultation had been undertaken, regarding proposals for a conservation area in Beckenham. The response to this was generally positive. A report will go for decision to the Council's Development Control in early 2015.

11. Business Improvement District

A Business Improvement District (BID) is now underway within Bromley Town Centre and looking to hold a vote in the Autumn of 2015.

Finally I wish to thank all the members of the Committee for an excellent year, a lot of work has been carried out, including lot of conversation and passion within this area of the Council. Also I would like to thank all the officers in the R&R Department, for not just their tireless work at the committee meetings, but the ongoing day to day work being carried out at a time of great pressure and economic challenge - you are all to be congratulated.

Councillor Ian Payne
Chairman, Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee