

RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notes following the submission of comments by PDS Members on the agenda for the cancelled meeting of 25 March 2020

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Not applicable.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

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

3a QUESTIONS FOR THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER

3b QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE

4 MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2020 AND 11 FEBRUARY 2020

The Minutes from the meetings held on 21 January 2020 and 11 February 2020 were confirmed.

5 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS PART 1 (PUBLIC) MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The report setting out matters outstanding from previous meetings was noted.

PRE-DECISION REVIEW OF RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PORTFOLIO REPORTS

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

6a BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20

This report provided the latest revenue budget monitoring position for 2019/20 for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio based on activity up to the end of December 2019.

The report was prepared before the severity of the Covid-19 impact became apparent. The actual financial position as at 31 December 2019 and projected costs and income to the end of the financial year were based on information available at the time of compiling the report in February and therefore exclude the impact of Covid-19.

Clarification was sought on which vacancies in the Planning Department gave rise to the £252k underspend noted in paragraph 3.2. The Assistant Director, Planning and Building Control would be requested to circulate this information to Members.

It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing be requested to endorse the latest 2019/20 budget monitoring position for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio.

6b CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 3RD QUARTER 2019/20 AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020 TO 2024

The report summarised the current position on capital expenditure and receipts following the 3rd quarter of 2019/20 and presented the new capital schemes in the annual capital review process

Consideration was given to the changes agreed on 12 February 2020 by the Executive in respect of the Capital Programme for the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio.

The report was noted and it was agreed that the Portfolio Holder be requested to confirm the changes agreed by the Executive on 12 February 2020.

7 REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Members submitted their views on the following reports seeking decision by the Leader of the Council under the revised decision making arrangements agreed by the Urgency Committee on Thursday 19th March 2020:

7a ORCHARD AND SHIPMAN: PROVISION OF HOUSING SERVICES

Bromley's formal contract for the procurement and management of private sector leased properties and management of Council owned temporary accommodation which formed an important part of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio was due to expire on 31 March 2021.

Members were therefore requested to consider the commissioning options for the service which were set out in this report.

Further confidential information was also considered in the Part 2 (Exempt from Publication) report.

In regard to the Covid-19 pandemic, Councillor Botting referred to correspondence she had received from a gentleman who had offered to make his studio flats available to the Council for quarantine purposes. The Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration was requested to consider this very kind and generous offer.

The report was noted and comments provided to Members of the Executive Committee.

7b APPROACH TO DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The report set out the current level of digital provision in the borough and suggested priority areas for investment. Whilst recognising that private sector investment would play a significant role in improving the borough's connectivity, the report also set out a range of intervention that the Council could explore to support the roll out of gigabit capable broadband through full-fibre connections and 5G networks.

The report advised that the Council agreed to a Digital Infrastructure Work Plan as the mechanism to deliver the most effective interventions that the Council could take to improve digital infrastructure and identified a programme for its delivery. It was recommended that the Council allocated up to £30k from the Growth Fund for the appointment of a consultant to provide specialist technical and legal advice.

As Ward Member, Councillor Bear fully supported the proposed investment in gigabit capability in the Crays.

The report was noted and comments provided to Members of the Executive Committee.

7c BROMLEY TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME: A NEW APPROACH

The report provided an update on the Bromley town centre improvement scheme, setting out the progress made to date and summarising the issues affecting the delivery of the reflective canopies and commercial units and recommended a new approach for the completion of the scheme.

In order to increase footfall in the town centre, Councillor Bear suggested a monthly themed fayre could be held e.g. antiques, local foods, crafts etc. She also suggested that consideration be given to provide some sort of seating (stone mushrooms perhaps) around the street theatre area to make it more of a feature.

Councillor Michael agreed with Ward Members in regard to the introduction of two commercial units on the High Street. After the COVID-19 pandemic had passed, it was likely there would be more empty retail units on the High Street, given the near-shutdown of the retail sector and the fact that some retailers had already collapsed e.g. Laura Ashley. She hoped this was not the

case and that retail would quickly bounce back but she was not convinced that two extra commercial units were required at this point.

Councillor Michael questioned the relevance and need for two “eye-catching” reflective canopies. While she had no problem with a sculptural “statement piece” for Bromley Town Centre in principle, she requested that consideration be given to the overall design to ensure that it was in keeping with the area.

The report was noted and comments provided to Members of the Executive Committee.

7d TOWN CENTRE PLANNING POLICY STRATEGY: BROMLEY AND ORPINGTON

The report provided an update on the planning strategy work for Orpington and Bromley town centres and suggested a proactive approach to guiding development in the town centres through the implementation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Several Members asked if there was any way of reducing the timescale for producing an SPD to less than 12 months.

The report was noted and comments provided to Members of the Executive Committee.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

8 UPDATE ON MORE HOMES BROMLEY SPV PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

This report updated Members on the acquisition of 400 properties for homeless households acquired through the SPV set up between Mears Group and the Council. It also reviewed the key performance areas in relation to the management contract provided by Plexus on behalf of the More Homes Bromley SPV.

Councillor Bear requested information on the current financial position of the SPV and asked if it was still solvent given the slower than anticipated roll out and hence income generation, but ongoing debt servicing. She also requested that the full year accounts for the SPV be forwarded to Members when available.

The report was noted.

9 PROVISION OF LIBRARY SERVICES - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT

Councillor Michael commended Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) for their handling of the Bromley Library Service during the eight-month strike action. GLL did an excellent job in ensuring that all the Borough’s libraries were kept

open during the dispute, given that 50 regular staff (out of 110) took part in the action.

She was disappointed to note that the number of new library members fell by 12.5% in the past six months and asked to what extent was this due to the industrial action. She also asked whether GLL would initiate a recruitment/marketing drive in order to boost the number of library members and users once the libraries had re-opened and things returned to normal.

Referring to Appendix 4 – Events and Activities, it was interesting to see that Orpington (119) had the largest number of events and activities in this period, closely followed by Petts Wood (116), while Central had only 40. In terms of attendees, it was interesting to see that West Wickham had the second largest number of attendees (1,498) after Orpington (1,704) despite holding only 46 events.

The report was noted.

10 EXPENDITURE ON CONSULTANTS 2018/19 AND 2019/20

Members were requested to consider a report in regard to expenditure on consultants across all Council departments for both revenue and capital budgets. This report was previously considered at a meeting of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee on 9 October 2019.

Councillor Bear referred to the £131k spent on consultants to assist with planning appeals and requested that this be noted in the appeal reports so Members could appreciate the full costs of responding to appeals.

The report was noted.

11 RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (JUNE 2020-MARCH 2021)

The report set out the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee Work Programme for the period June 2020-March 2021.

The report was noted.

12 CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

The report outlined the work undertaken by the Committee during the current Municipal Year which had focused on issues relating to housing, town centres, leisure and culture, planning and scrutiny of the Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman had also thanked Members and officers for their continued dedication to this Committee and the Council.

The report was noted.

13 CONFIDENTIAL (EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION) SECTION

14 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING PDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2020

The Exempt Part 2 Minutes from the meeting held on 11 February 2020 were noted and no concerns were raised. These Minutes would be confirmed and signed at the next full scheduled meeting.

15 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS PART 2 (EXEMPT) MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The report was noted.

16 REVIEW OF PART 2 (EXEMPT) EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Members submitted their views on the following Part 2 Exempt report seeking decision by the Leader of the Council under the revised decision making arrangements agreed by the Urgency Committee on Thursday 19th March 2020:

16a ORCHARD AND SHIPMAN: PROVISION OF HOUSING SERVICES - PART 2 (CONFIDENTIAL)

The confidential information was considered together with the Part 1 report.

The Part 2 report was noted.