

GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 6 July 2021

Present:

Councillor Pauline Tunnicliffe (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Turner (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Nicholas Bennett MA J.P.,
Mark Brock, Robert Evans, Kira Gabbert, Colin Hitchins,
Josh King, Alexa Michael, Neil Reddin FCCA,
Harry Stranger and Ryan Thomson

Also Present:

Councillor Angela Wilkins

164 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Melanie Stevens (however, she did listen to the meeting via phone link.)

165 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

166 QUESTIONS

No questions had been received.

167 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2021 be confirmed.

168 AUDIT OF THE 2019/20 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS Report FSD21042

The report set out the current position concerning the external audit of the Council's 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

Janet Dawson from EY, the Council's independent external auditor, attended the meeting to set out the current position. It had been a laborious process, but work on the 2019/20 accounts was nearing completion, which would allow them to move on to the 2020/21 accounts. Final information about property and equipment valuations had been received from officers, and she hoped to

be able to provide their qualified opinion report in August. She confirmed that they did not expect to find any new issues of concern about property and valuation issues. The Council was required to submit a robust going concern assessment forecasting twelve months ahead of the expected signing date of the accounts, but she anticipated that the Council would be in a strong position given its level of reserves.

Officers confirmed that the Council did not have a single fixed asset register or a register for furniture and equipment - there were various separate registers. EY had commented that Bromley had a small Finance Team – officers confirmed that the Team was lean, but that other factors were being examined to improve the closing process, including consideration of resourcing bottle-necks, better IT processes and opportunities for upskilling staff.

Ms Dawson confirmed that the external auditor had raised for several years the need for Council's banking accounts to be segregated between the Pension Fund and the General Account. It was confirmed by officers that this would be possible with the Oracle system upgrade due to be implemented no later than March 2022.

The Chairman thanked Ms Dawson for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED that the external auditor's Audit Results Report be noted, including details of:

- (a) the proposed audit opinion on the financial statements;**
- (b) errors, adjusted and unadjusted audit differences that the audit has highlighted;**
- (c) outstanding matters that require addressing before the audit can be completed; and**
- (d) the position concerning outstanding objections and the impact on external audit work.**

169 RETURN TO PHYSICAL MEETINGS
Report CSD21060

The regulations which permitted virtual committee meetings had expired on 7th May 2021, so members considered the future arrangements for meetings until the lockdown restrictions were lifted and beyond. To be formally present at a meeting and to vote Councillors now needed to be physically present – this requirement did not apply to officers and members of the public, although the Council did have to provide facilities for members of the public to attend meetings in person.

Live-streaming or broadcasting meetings could still perform a valuable role in promoting the Council's activities and was a legitimate means of managing

attendance, by allowing those who were content to watch remotely to continue doing so. Officers were investigating the options for updating the existing audio facilities in the Council Chamber to enable hybrid meetings and integrate with live-streaming. This could be achieved at relatively modest initial cost, about £15k, and within existing budgets. There would be wider uses for the equipment for a range of other meetings.

Some members supported equipment being introduced in Committee rooms.

A member commented that it was still desirable in some meetings, such as Plans Sub-Committees, that officers should attend in person to advise members; there were also some concerns about members of the public being filmed in meetings, but the practical issues could be overcome and data protection notices would be updated as necessary. Most Members considered that the proposals should be supported.

RESOLVED that

(1) Measures to enable hybrid meetings, remote attendance by visiting members, officers and members of the public, and live-streaming of meetings, be supported and introduced.

(2) The Leader be requested to lobby for a change to the law that will enable remote attendance at meetings by members.

170 REVIEW OF THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO OFFICERS
Report CSD21077

The Scheme of Delegation to officers was reviewed at least once a year - an updated version was usually considered at the annual meeting of the Council. The Scheme had not been thoroughly reviewed for some years; in most years, including 2021, there were few, if any, significant changes made. At the annual Council meeting on 19th May 2021 a member complained that a number of provisions in the scheme were incorrect or should be reviewed, and at the Mayor's suggestion, the matter was referred to this Committee to consider. The particular issues raised at the annual Council meeting were addressed in the report.

The Scheme covered in one document both non-executive delegations and executive delegations from the Leader. Council could make changes to the non-executive delegations, but changes to the executive delegations could only be made by the Leader. Bromley's Scheme set out in detail all the specific functions delegated to officers; some councils had adopted much shorter schemes based on setting out what functions were not delegated to officers, but were reserved for member decision. The Director of Corporate Services emphasised that the Scheme allowed for changes in legislation; the Scheme was not undermined by minor errors or references to legislation that had not been updated. He also explained that officers did have authority to take urgent action outside the Scheme when necessary – although this was very rarely required.

Members considered that they should examine the Scheme in more detail – it was proposed that a member working group should be set up to review the Scheme, consult with PDS Committees and report back before the next annual Council meeting.

RESOLVED that a member working group be set up to review the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

171 WORK PROGRAMME AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING
Report CSD21076

The Committee considered its work programme for 2021/22. It was noted that there would be a report in the autumn reviewing the 2021 GLA elections – members were also interested in the changes to ward boundaries and the proposed new parliamentary boundary changes.

Members noted that after the meeting there would be a presentation from Steve Phillips, Heath, Safety and Licensing Manager, on licensing issues.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

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

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the item of business referred to below as it is 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.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

173 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2021 be confirmed.

The Meeting ended at 7.40 pm

Chairman