

## **EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 24 March 2022

### **Present:**

Councillor Christopher Marlow (Chairman)  
Councillor Kira Gabbert (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Yvonne Bear,  
Nicholas Bennett MA J.P., David Cartwright QFSM,  
Nicky Dykes, Will Harmer, Colin Hitchins, Simon Jeal,  
Michael Tickner, Pauline Tunnicliffe and Angela Wilkins

### **Also Present:**

Councillor Melanie Stevens (via MS Teams)

Councillor Aisha Cuthbert, Executive Assistant to the  
Leader of the Council  
Councillor Michael Rutherford, Portfolio Holder for  
Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management  
Councillor Colin Smith, Leader of the Council

### **90 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr Robert Evans and Councillor Melanie Stevens. Councillor Stevens joined the meeting via conference call.

### **91 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no additional declarations of interest.

### **92 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

No questions were received.

### **93 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2022 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)**

The minutes of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee meeting held on 7 February 2022 (excluding exempt information), were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**94 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME  
Report CSD22039**

The report dealt with the Committee's business management including the proposed work plan for the 2022/23 municipal year.

The Director of Finance agreed to investigate whether an additional Treasury Management Report would be required for 2022/23.

Members noted that the Committee's Task and Finish Group was likely to continue in 2022/23 and Membership would be dependent on the composition of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee next year.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

**95 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period March 2022 to June 2022. It was noted that Economic Development Strategy listed for decision by the Executive on 30 March 2022 had been deferred.

In respect of the Biggin Hill Airport Noise Action Plan, the Chairman confirmed that the intention of the Committee's previous recommendation was for Biggin Hill Airport to respond by the end of June 2022 with a report being presented to Committee in Autumn 2022.

**96 RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS  
MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO - PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The Committee considered the following report where the Resources, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder was recommended to take a decision.

**a NORTH BLOCK SOLAR PV INSTALLATION  
Report ES20172**

The report set out a proposal for the installation of a solar photovoltaic (PV) system on the rooftop of North Block building (located at the Civic Centre). The Council could make use of Section 106 Carbon Offsetting contributions to fund energy/carbon reduction initiatives on its own estate.

The Director of Finance highlighted that the report proposed a change to the Capital Programme and as such required a decision from the Executive.

In opening the discussion, the Chairman reported that since the publication of the report he had received further information setting out the financial justification for the recommendations which supported the conclusions set out in the report.

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The Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that the Council had achieved the maximum reduction in energy consumption prior to the installation of the new system as with further energy savings it may be possible to install a smaller system. Members requested that following the meeting the Environmental Programme Officer provide an update surrounding any additional energy savings that could be made and whether they could impact on the overall project. The Environmental Programme Officer was also asked to provide a key to the diagrams and pictures included in the appendices as well as details of the total carbon savings as a percentage.

In relation to the timings for the project for the rest of the Civic Centre site, the Environmental Programme Officer explained that the North Block had been treated as a separate project however, given the increases in fuel prices it was acknowledged that it would be beneficial to deliver further savings as soon as possible.

In summarising the debate, the Chairman noted that it was an exciting project, contributing to the Council's net zero carbon ambition. However, details around the risks of excessive scope needed further consideration prior to the Executive taking a decision.

**RESOLVED: That**

- 1. The report be noted and referred to the meeting of the Executive on 30 March 2022.**
- 2. The Executive be recommended to:**
  - (a) Approve the proposal to initiate and complete the procurement of a solar PV installation at the identified Civic Centre location, at an estimated whole life contract value of £119k, using the Council's s106 Carbon Offsetting Fund (COF) to finance the project. System design to meet these criteria is stipulated in the contract specification.**
  - (b) Approve the use of the Fusion21 framework and delegate authority to the Contract Officer to appoint the preferred contractor which is evidenced through the tender evaluation process.**

**97 SCRUTINY OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Colin Smith, attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Committee. Councillor Smith gave a brief introduction highlighting the following issues:

- The Leader was proud of the performance of the Council over the past four years.

- During the course of the last Council, the Borough had gone through unprecedented times.
- The strength of the residents of the Borough as a whole was remarkable with a number of residents stepping up to fulfil voluntary roles.
- In addition, departments across the Council had continued to deliver strong performances with a number of initiatives being nationally recognised.

The Leader then responded to questions, making the following comments:

- Moving forward there would be increasing pressure on budgets and the role of the voluntary sector would be crucial. As yet, the impact of commuters returning to central London was unclear, but it was important to maintain the interest in and ethos of supporting the community and it was believed that the steps and measures put in place by the Council would be sufficient.
- The last two years had delivered learning around agile and flexible working and the view was that some form of split between office-based and agile working was beneficial. Through the offer of flexible/agile working the Council had been able to attract candidates to positions that had previously been hard to fill. In addition, it had been possible for the Council to retain more permanent staff and this had provided continuity for services. Any decisions around agile working would come before Members early in the new 2022-2026 administration.
- There would be a single point of contact for any Member queries regarding support for Ukrainian Refugees coming to the Borough. Members would be notified as soon as these arrangements had been confirmed.
- With respect to supporting refugees arriving from the Ukraine, the Council remained in contact with the Government and as policy was updated the information on the Council's website would be updated. The Council would be responsible for undertaking checks on safeguarding arrangements and the accommodation offered by sponsor families.
- The funding being provided by the Government will be used to ensure that the infrastructure was in place to facilitate the necessary checks. Families coming in would be required to register with the Government and provide notification of their destination in the UK. The Government would then instruct local authorities to carry out the checks. Members noted that processes needed to be expedited and there was a clear coordinating role for the Council. This was likely to be labour intensive. Policies would evolve and improve overtime and all Members would be kept informed of the changes via a weekly email as well as updates to the website. The Chairman suggested that it may be helpful for a briefing providing answers to frequently asked questions to be circulated to all Members.

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- It was agreed that it would be beneficial to enable incoming refugees to make contact with existing Bromley residents who spoke Russian and Ukrainian as this may help with feelings of isolation. It was noted that there was a Facebook group for Russian speakers in Bromley and details of this group would be circulated to Members.
- A few years ago, Bromley had been found to have one of the best waste systems in London. Policy continued to be reviewed and evolve and with an increasing number of people working from home more waste was being produced and this is something that the Council would look to address.
- By proven measurements, Bromley had amongst the best air quality levels in London.
- The issue of electric vehicle charging points was being overseen by the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee. There was a need to roll out electric vehicle charging points where they were needed and required with the situation evolving very quickly. Developments around hybrid charging points afforded further opportunities.

The Committee thanked the Leader for his update.

## **98 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 30 March 2022:

### **(5) BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22 FSD22032**

The report provided the second budget monitoring position for 2021/22 based on expenditure and activity levels up to the end of December 2021. The report also highlighted any significant variations which will impact on future years as well as any early warnings that could impact on the final year end position. This report also provides an update on the COVID grant position.

The Director of Finance introduced the report and explained that Officers were grateful for the support and sense of urgency from Members in respect of the Ukrainian Refugee Scheme. On Monday 28 March 2022, a Gold (highest priority) meeting would take place to discuss the situation and the arrangements to be put in place. Officers would also begin to visit sponsor homes. The issue of Police checks had been raised with the Home Office and there was an obligation on local authorities to undertake safeguarding checks. In addition, discussions were taking place concerning the long-term impact of the refugee crisis. It was recognised that a cross-departmental approach was required as refugee families would need support from a range of services. A review would be undertaken concerning how existing staff could be utilised to support the Council's response. As well as looking at

accommodation, consideration would need to be given to facilitating community facilities where families would be able to meet.

The Committee noted that a further update would be provided to the Executive on 30 March 2022, and this would give an indication of capacity issues. The Director of Finance highlighted that it was not possible to predict numbers however it was clear that there would be a number of challenges to be overcome and further challenges the longer the crisis continued. The Committee noted that refugees arriving in the UK would have access to work and full benefits.

In response to a question, the Director of Finance confirmed that the £10,500 funding provided by the Government was intended to last for a period of one year and would then be reviewed. The situation was currently very fluid and there would be a quarterly monitoring process. The intention of the Council was to manage the costs of the refugee crisis as separate from the wider Council budget.

Turning to other issues in the budget, the Chairman noted that the impact on rental income as a result of the Covid pandemic was unsurprising. The Chairman also requested that the Director of Corporate Services and Governance provide an update on the cost pressures arising from balancing internal legal advice and advice from external Counsel.

In relation to ongoing inflationary pressures, the Director of Finance confirmed that the Council had budgeted for 4% inflation which at the time had seemed generous. In terms of funding, the Council had received inflationary increases of between 2.5% and 3% which was much lower than the current reality. With current inflationary pressures in excess of 7% the increased costs to the Council amounted to approximately £8m and although contingencies were in place, this was something that would need to be closely monitored. Members noted that it was likely that deglobalisation factors would put pressure on future budgets which would, in turn, impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Contingencies had been built into budgets to manage some of the pressures but there would undoubtedly be future challenges. The Director of Finance confirmed that, to date, there was nothing additional built into the local authority settlement and this meant that inflation would have a significant impact.

The Committee noted that there was some additional support for vulnerable families through the Household Support Fund and the Council Tax rebate scheme.

**RESOLVED:**

**(a) That Executive be recommended to:**

- 1. Consider the latest financial position;**

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- 2. Note that a projected net overspend on services of £1,208k is forecast based on information as at December 2021.**
  - 3. Consider the comments from Chief Officers detailed in Appendix 2 of the report;**
  - 4. Note a projected reduction to the General Fund balance of £24k as detailed in section 3.4 of the report;**
  - 5. Note the full year cost pressures of £11.884m as detailed in section 3.5 of the report;**
  - 6. agree to set aside a provision of £350k to deal with a legal matter (see Part II of the agenda) to be met from the 2021/22 Central Contingency sum as detailed in para. 3.2.2 of the report;**
  - 7. Note the sum agreed at Council of £1m set aside in a Platinum Jubilee Parks earmarked reserve, funded from the 2021/22 Central Contingency as detailed in para. 3.2.3 of the report;**
  - 8. Recommend to Council that a sum of £4.605m is set aside in a Contribution to Collection Fund Surplus Earmarked Reserve as detailed in para. 3.2.4 of the report;**
  - 9. recommend to Council that a sum of £2.900m is set aside in a Capital Fund earmarked reserve, funded from the 2021/22 Central Contingency as detailed in para. 3.2.5 of the report;**
  - 10. Recommend to Council that a sum of £1.242m is set aside in the Housing Investment Fund earmarked reserve, funded from the 2021/22 Central Contingency as detailed in para. 3.2.6 of the report;**
  - 11. Agree to the release of funds from the central contingency as detailed in paragraphs 3.2.7 to 3.2.16 of the report;**
  - 12. agree to the carry forward requests as detailed in para. 3.3 of the report;**
  - 13. Agree the funding requirement of the Property team as detailed in paragraph 3.10 of the report;**
  - 14. Note the COVID allocation and expenditure in Appendix 7 of the report;**
  - 15. Identify any issues that should be referred to individual Portfolio Holders for further action.**
- (b) That Council be recommended to:**

- 1. Agree a sum of £4.605m is set aside in a Contribution to Collection Fund Surplus Earmarked Reserve as detailed in para. 3.2.4 of the report;**
- 2. Agree a sum of £2.900m is set aside in a Capital Fund earmarked reserve, funded from the 2021/22 Central Contingency as detailed in para. 3.2.5 of the report;**
- 3. Agree a sum of £1.242m is set aside in the Housing Investment Fund earmarked reserve, funded from the 2021/22 Central Contingency as detailed in para. 3.2.6 of the report.**

**99 SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Executive Assistant to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Aisha Cuthbert, attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Committee. A written update from the Executive Assistant had been circulated prior to the meeting and Councillor Cuthbert gave a brief introduction highlighting the following issues:

- The Action Plan attached to the Tackling Loneliness Strategy had been considered and endorsed by the Adult Care and Health PDS Committee on Tuesday 22 March 2022. The Executive Assistant thanked all Members for their overwhelming support in developing and delivering the Tackling Loneliness Strategy.

The Executive Assistant then responded to questions, making the following comments:

- No charity or groups had mentioned or expressed concern about additional need due to the increased cost of living although Cllr Cuthbert acknowledged this could happen in the future. The Community Links Community Hub was being re-launched and it was hoped that this would provide additional opportunities for residents across the borough to engage with others. The Committee noted that it had been agreed that quarterly updates would be provided to the Adult Care and Health PDS Committee which would enable this to be monitored.
- It was also recognised that refugee families arriving from the Ukraine could suffer isolation for a number of reasons including language barriers with there being an important role for the voluntary sector and the Council in providing support. Conversations could also take place around how the Wellbeing Fund managed by Bromley Well could be utilised.
- In terms of embedding the Loneliness Strategy, Members and Officers were beginning to spontaneously talk about loneliness. In addition, an

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internal communications campaign was underway to ensure that messages were being disseminated across all Council departments.

The Committee thanked the Executive Assistant for her update.

Following the meeting, Cllr Cuthbert expressed and recorded her thanks to the Leader, Councillor Colin Smith, for his support for her in her role as Executive Assistant.

**100 ANNUAL PDS REPORT 2021/22  
Report CSD22021**

The Committee noted the Annual Policy Development and Scrutiny Report for 2021/22. Any further comments and amendments would be incorporated by Democratic Services prior to Submission to Full Council on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

The Committee paid tribute to the immense work of Councillor Mary Cooke who had unexpectedly passed away early in the year. Councillor Cooke had been Chairman of the Adult Care and Health PDS Committee serving the Committee with distinction since 2017 and would be missed.

**RESOLVED: That the Annual Policy Development and Scrutiny Report be approved for submission to Full Council.**

**101 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2022**

The Part 2 (exempt) minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2022, were agreed, and signed as a correct record.

The Meeting ended at 8.59 pm

Chairman