

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the Meeting of the
Council of the Borough
held at 7.00 pm on 12 December 2022

Present:

**The Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor Hannah Gray**

**The Deputy Mayor
Councillor Christine Harris**

Councillors

Jeremy Adams	Alisa Igoe	Angela Page
Jonathan Andrews	Julie Ireland	Chris Price
Felicity Bainbridge	Mike Jack	Chloe-Jane Ross
Kathy Bance MBE	Simon Jeal	Shaun Slator
Yvonne Bear	David Jefferys	Colin Smith
Nicholas Bennett J.P.	Kevin Kennedy-Brooks	Mark Smith
Kim Botting FRSA	Josh King	Alison Stammers
Mike Botting	Jonathan Laidlaw	Melanie Stevens
Mark Brock	Kate Lymer	Ryan Thomson
Peter Dean	Keith Onslow	Michael Tickner
Sophie Dunbar	Tony Owen	Pauline Tunnicliffe
Robert Evans	Christopher Marlow	Thomas Turrell
Kira Gabbert	Ruth McGregor	Sam Webber
Adam Jude Grant	Tony McPartlan	
Colin Hitchins	Alexa Michael	

The meeting was opened with prayers

Before the start of the meeting, the Mayor led Members in a few moments of silence in memory of two eminent former members who had died recently – Honorary Freeman and Honorary Alderman Dennis Barkway and Honorary Alderman Anthony Wilkinson

In the Chair

The Mayor, Councillor Hannah Gray

47 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jessica Arnold, David Cartwright, Graeme Casey, Will Connolly, Aisha Cuthbert, Simon Fawthrop, Dr Sunil Gupta, Charles Joel, Andrew Lee (who viewed online), Will Rowlands, Diane Smith, Harry Stranger and Rebecca Wiffen.

48 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

49 To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 10 October 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2022 be confirmed.

50 Questions

One question had been received from a member of the public for oral reply. The question, with the answer given, is set out in Appendix A to these minutes.

Six questions had been received from a member of the public for written reply. The questions, with the answers given, are set out in Appendix B to these minutes.

Thirteen questions had been received from members of the Council for oral reply. The questions, with the replies given, are set out in Appendix C to these minutes.

Eleven questions had been received from members of the Council for written reply. The questions, with the answers given, are set out in Appendix D to these minutes.

51 To consider any statements that may be made by the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holders or Chairmen of Committees.

A statement was made by Cllr Yvonne Bear, Portfolio Holder for Renewal Recreation and Housing, at the request of Councillors Simon Jeal and Alisa Igoe, on the re-housing of Ukrainian families.

Councillor Bear confirmed that 582 Ukrainians had come to Bromley, including 205 children, under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme which the Council had a close involvement with locally. Hundreds more had come as part of the Family Scheme. Officers had been in contact with all sponsoring residents and, of those spoken to, the vast majority, 87%, were happy to continue hosting beyond the initial six month period. This was testament to the extraordinary generosity of the people of Bromley and their willingness to help others in need was deeply appreciated. She had been advised that hosts who were still accommodating guests, including re-matches, on 1st January 2023 would receive a payment of £250 per household and a further payment if still sponsoring on 31st March 2023. Where host families had been unable to continue, and Ukrainian families had consequently presented as homeless, the Council had done its best to find suitable alternative accommodation, either with another host or to assist them with finding private accommodation

or by placing them in temporary accommodation, in-borough wherever possible. In addition, the Council continued to provide additional support to Ukrainian families by way of welcome packs of essentials and help with accessing schools, services and employment, support for hosting families preparing their homes for guests, such as with stair-gates for children, and organising regular coffee mornings to enable families and hosts to come together.

The Portfolio Holder also offered a special thank you to Cllr Kira Gabbert who had worked tirelessly to provide a warm welcome to arriving families and assist officers in shaping the Council's offering. It had been a huge benefit to have her language skills and cultural knowledge available and her efforts were very much appreciated.

In response to questions, Cllr Bear confirmed that the support for families whose placement was stopping was the same as for any family, and the Council would assist with deposits for rented accommodation if that was an appropriate solution. The first port of call was to re-match with another hosting family, but on some occasions families had preferred their independence. Families were still arriving as the war continued, and the Scheme was continuing. The funding only applied to the end of the financial year and the Council would be making representations to have the funding extended. The Council wanted to continue to extend a warm welcome to people who had suffered in Ukraine.

(During this item, Cllr Nicholas Bennett declared that two Ukrainian people were living in his home, and Councillor Kira Gabbert declared that she was involved in supporting Ukrainian families.)

52 Treasury Management - Quarter 2 Performance and Mid-Year Review
Report CSD22133

A motion to note the report and approve the 2022/23 prudential indicators was moved by Councillor Christopher Marlow, seconded by Cllr Colin Smith and **CARRIED**.

53 Capital Programme Monitoring 2022/23
Report CSD22136

A motion to approve an increase of £23,970k to the Capital Programme, in particular an increase of £3,000 in relation to the budget for depot improvement and £20,970 for the preferred option for the capital budget for the Civic Centre redevelopment scheme, was moved by Cllr Christopher Marlow, seconded by Cllr Colin Smith and **CARRIED**.

54 Operational Property Review
Report CSD22139

A motion to approve the recommendation to note the report and approve expenditure of £3,000k for the delivery of Operational Estate Strategy workstreams was moved by Cllr Christopher Marlow and seconded by Cllr Colin Smith.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Jeremy Adams and seconded by Cllr Simon Jeal to add, at the end of the recommendation –

“... subject to the following -

- (i) Recognising the risks of failing to maintain property in the risk register
- (ii) Offering a clear assessment of the property market for public assets that the council is facing in its disposal programme
- (iii) Explicitly committing to maintain high quality of council services in light of changes from the operational property review
- (iv) Fully consulting all impacted tenants and affected commissioned services
- (v) Carrying out a full equality impact assessment.”

On being put to the vote the amendment was **LOST**.

The Leader offered an assurance that no single current sub-lessee at Community House will be worse off financially or in terms of the office facilities they will enjoy at the new accommodation.

On being put to the vote, the original recommendations were **CARRIED**.

55 Audit and Risk Management Committee - Membership
Report CSD22132

A motion to (i) agree an amendment to the Council Constitution to allow the appointment of up to two independent co-opted Members to Audit and Risk Management Committee, and (ii) to appoint Cllr Ruth McGregor to the Committee, was moved by Cllr Michael Tickner, seconded by Cllr Robert Evans and **CARRIED**.

56 Local Pension Board - Annual Report 2022
Report CSD22131

A motion to receive and note the Local Pension Board Annual Report 2022 was moved by Cllr Keith Onslow, seconded by Cllr Kira Gabbert and **CARRIED**.

57 To consider Motions of which notice has been given.

(A) Digital Inclusion

The following motion was moved by Cllr Chloe-Jane Ross and seconded by Cllr Julie Ireland -

“Council notes:

- At a high level, the digital divide is the gap between those with Internet access and those without it.
- As access to some public services is moved online some Bromley residents may have difficulty accessing them. In some cases, this may be an inconvenience and in others it may impact their quality of life.
- It has previously been estimated 18% of Londoners lack basic digital skills (ONS 2019), with at least 9% not having any (Lloyds 2019). Analysis also shows that 10% of Londoners do not own a smartphone (Ofcom, 2020). This could mean tens of thousands of Bromley residents are digitally excluded from accessing online services.
- The main reason people lack digital access is older age (Bromley has a higher-than-average older population). Disabilities, learning difficulties, ethnic origin, location, culture and language, and low income are also important factors.
- Some residents will always need an offline option to access services.

Council believes:

- “Bromley must be a fair and inclusive borough for everyone” (Bromley’s Equality Policy)
- Digital services have been beneficial to both the Council and local people as they are efficient, accessible and trackable.
- Increased accessibility and usage of digital services is desirable.
- There must be an alternate offline option for those unable to access digital services.

Council therefore calls for:

- The creation of a Digital Exclusion Champion to ensure there is support for local people who do not have digital access.
- The development of a Council Digital Inclusion Strategy which will help reduce the digital divide in Bromley.
- A review of non-digital service provision to ensure it is robust and accessible to those that need it, including scenario mapping for critical services.

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- A commitment to use information the Council delivers to every house in the borough to include information that will improve digital inclusion and support those that are digitally excluded.
- All council policies to give specific consideration to people without digital access.
- All Council contractors and service providers have policies in place to improve the accessibility of their digital services and offline access to their services for residents that cannot access them digitally."

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Ryan Thompson and seconded by Cllr Simon Jeal –

Adding, in the third section of the motion, after "Council therefore calls for" the words -

"An exploration of potential partnerships with major telecoms networks and local digital education providers" and

"A study into learnings from other local authorities that we can embrace."

On being put to the vote, the amendment was **LOST**

A motion to refer the issue to Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee for further investigation and report back to full Council was moved by Cllr Nicholas Bennett, seconded by Cllr Julie Ireland and **CARRIED**.

(B) Housing Associations

The following motion was moved by Cllr Tony McPartlan and seconded by Cllr Kathy Bance -

"This Council recognises the important work Bromley's housing associations do, and the challenging environment they operate within.

This Council is however concerned about the increasing number of complaints and case work from housing association tenants. These complaints and cases include, but are not limited to: unsuitable living conditions, maintenance requests being ignored and general unresponsiveness to communications.

This Council is also concerned that Members acting on behalf of residents can also have difficulties in bringing resolutions to complaints in a timely manner.

Considering the above and the recent tragic death of Awaab Ishak, This Council will therefore:

- Ask housing officers to work with housing associations to establish a regular forum, meeting in public, through which members and residents

- can raise unsatisfactory cases and scrutinise housing associations to seek solutions in a timely manner
- Work with Bromley's housing associations to commit to the following:
 - A dedicated contact (or contacts) for Bromley's Councillor enquiries
 - An acknowledgment of each enquiry within two working days
 - A response to each enquiry within 7 working days, including a plan to resolve the issue
 - Produce a directory of all Bromley housing associations, including their dedicated contact(s)"

On being put to the vote, the motion was **LOST**.

58 The Mayor's announcements and communications.

The Mayor thanked Members for attending recent events, including the Copper Ceylon dinner for Ukraine which had raised £1,300 which would be added to the funds raised by The Rotary Club of Bromley, the Ball at Oakley House on Saturday 19th November and the Classic Movie Themes concert with the Lewisham Concert Band on Saturday 3rd December in the Great Hall. She also thanked Members who had represented the Borough by attending the various services at local churches and memorials by laying wreaths or by reading a lesson.

The Mayor reminded Members about the following events -

- Holocaust Memorial Day – a service would be held on the morning of Friday 27th January 2023
- The Whisky Tasting evening on Saturday 28th January to celebrate Burns night.
- The Mayor's annual quiz on Friday 24th February at Crofton Halls
- The annual Mayor of Bromley Awards next March – Members would be receiving a letter inviting nominations of individuals who had performed outstanding voluntary service, over a number of years, in the Borough. There was also an additional category for the Exceptional Young Volunteer for young people under 21 years of age.
- The Fly a Spitfire prize draw.

Councillor Nicholas Bennett led Members in thanking Neill Tully who was leaving his role as Mayoral Attendant.

59 Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2002 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items 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**

60 Capital Programme Monitoring 2022/23 (Part 2)

A motion to note the part 2 information in this report was moved by Cllr Christopher Marlow, seconded by Cllr Colin Smith and **CARRIED**.

61 Operational Property Review (Part 2)

Members noted that the wards attributed to two locations mentioned in the appendix to the report were incorrect – these would be checked.

A motion to note the part 2 information in the report was moved by Cllr Christopher Marlow, seconded by Cllr Colin Smith and **CARRIED**.

The Meeting ended at 9.50 pm

Mayor