



THE LONDON BOROUGH

Policy Development & Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/2023

For submission to Full Council on 24th April 2023

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1. Foreword

1. On behalf of all my colleagues who are engaged in Policy Development and Scrutiny Committees in the London Borough of Bromley, I have great pleasure in presenting our Annual Report for 2022/2023, which summarises the work that has been carried out by the Committees during the Council year.
2. The economy has exited strongly from Covid related restrictions, brings a spike in the CPI inflation measures. This has added to the ongoing cost pressures faced by Bromley Council over the fiscal year just ending. The consequence of the challenges faced, around the revenue budget constraints and the capital and maintenance programme challenges leaves a funding gap in the medium to long term which has to be settled. The 2023/24 budget has been balanced, however for future years the gap as follows; £1.7M for 2024/25 and £10.1M for 2025/26 and £29.6M for 2026/27. These figures allow for growth pressures of £25M in 2023/4 rising to £49M in 2026/7. As part of the budgeting process growth will need to be contained to ensure that future years budget gaps are met. £2M saved in the coming year will reduce the 2024/5 budget gap and reduce the pressure on 2025/6 budget. Early savings will reduce the need to eat into reserves and increase the income from treasury management. The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget, so effort is needed to generate income and find additional savings over this period to 2026/27. Innovation and initiatives over the next few years will be really important in driving down the budget gap for future years. This will mean investing in IT and Accommodation to ensure the Council is fit for the future. But this strategy is even more important in meeting the net zero carbon dioxide target for direct Council activities by 2029. Over the next year more invest to save and efficiency measures should come forward to help promote these ambitions.
3. Against this tough background 2022/23 has come in on budget subject to the use of some contingency. Over recent years the Council has set balanced budgets, without significantly impairing the delivery of frontline services. However, in light of the challenges ahead, the Council will increase Council Tax this coming year by a Bromley element of 4.99%, including the 2% increase to fund social care. In addition the Labour London Mayor and GLA also increased their precept, (This is expected to be a whopping 9.7% though the final details have yet to be agreed) making a net overall increase of 6.1% for Bromley residents. Current assumptions indicate a similar 4.99% increase in Bromley's Council Tax share in 2024/25. Bromley Council will as a result of the changes sacrifice its debt free status, meaning that residents will now contribute towards debt interest rather than benefitting from interest on reserves.
4. The Council continues to promote significant change, both in organizational terms and in its ability to continue to provide services expected by residents. The Council has over 1300 statutory obligations to discharge, which cost several millions of pounds per annum. These take priority over discretionary spending. The funding gap can't be closed without taking some difficult decisions and halting some services all together. Due to prudent financial management, Bromley Council is able to deal with these challenges but needs to ensure that early decisions are taken and adequate reserves are retained and where appropriate invested to maintain sustainable finances.
5. In addition to the financial challenges ahead and the need to become a different organisation with fewer resources, the Council should grasp opportunities for wider integration across public services including health and local government and look at cooperation with other Local Authorities to drive efficiencies. The Council will need to identify new investment opportunities to help protect key services. This might need a new look with an investment and revenue generation sub-committee, to help grow revenue outside the usual call on tax payer funds. Scrutiny will remain key to ensure that there is adequate control and stability. In the context of these challenges, the Council should review its current structures including the PDS function to ensure that scrutiny can drill down to an appropriate level when looking at opportunities for value for money.
6. The PDS Committees will continue to have an important role over the coming years to formulate acceptable solutions for the reduction in service provision, which has to come, whilst continuing to deliver quality services to the residents of Bromley.

7. Finally, I would like to thank all Committee Chairmen, members, and the dedicated Council officers for their diligence and hard work during last year in finding practical solutions, which have ensured that Bromley Council could formulate a balanced budget and is able to continue to provide essential services next year, which are important to our residents.

Cllr. Simon Fawthrop

Chairman, Executive Resources and Contracts PDS Committee

2. Policy Development and Scrutiny Chairmen 2022/23



Cllr Simon Fawthrop
Executive, Resources & Contracts



Cllr Mark Brock
Adult Care & Health Services



Cllr Kira Gabbert
Children, Education & Families



Cllr Will Rowlands
Environment and Community Services



Cllr David Cartwright
Public Protection and Enforcement



Cllr Tony Owen
Renewal, Recreation & Housing

3. Policy Development and Scrutiny in Bromley

Introduction

- 2.1 Six Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Committees at Bromley discharge the overview and scrutiny functions conferred by sections 21 and 32 of the Local Government Act 2000 and successive legislation. The Executive and Resources PDS Committee has an over-arching, co-ordinating role on behalf of the other five PDS Committees and is required by the Council's Constitution to present Full Council with an Annual Report "on the Policy Development and Scrutiny functions and PDS budget, and amended working methods if appropriate" (Article 6, Section 6.03 (d) of the Constitution).
- 2.2 The PDS Committees in 2022/23 were:
- Executive, Resources & Contracts (covering both the Resources, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio and the Executive)
 - Adult Care & Health Services
 - Children, Education & Families
 - Environment & Community Services (covering both the Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces Portfolio and the Transport, highways and Road Safety Portfolio)
 - Public Protection and Enforcement
 - Renewal, Recreation & Housing
- 2.3 In addition to these Committees there are two PDS Sub-Committees:
- Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee (Adult Care and Health)
 - Budget Sub-Committee (Children, Education and Families)
- 2.4 Although they have no decision-making powers, PDS Committees and Sub-Committees have key roles in contributing to policy development and scrutinising the decisions of the Executive and individual Portfolio Holders.

Policy Reviews

- 2.5 PDS Committees advise Portfolio Holders, the Executive and Full Council on policies, budgets and service delivery. PDS Committees can commission groups of Councillors to review an issue or policy, so assisting a Portfolio Holder or the Executive to improve a service or function affecting local people. This can be linked to a forthcoming decision by a Portfolio Holder or the Executive or to assist in formulating fresh, new policy. In each case detailed, evidence-based assessments are carried out and recommendations made in a report. In the process, Councillors can speak to a broad range of people to help gather information for their evidence-based reports.

One-Off Reviews

- 2.6 In addition to in-depth policy reviews, PDS Committees can also review a topical issue at Committee with comments and recommendations referred on to the Portfolio Holder. These reviews are often based around a presentation or an evidence-giving session with expert witnesses.

Performance and Budget Monitoring

- 2.7 PDS Committees monitor the performance of services, functions and contracts within their remit, assessing performance against key performance indicators and policy objectives. Concerns are reported to a Portfolio Holder who can then, if necessary, be called to a PDS Committee meeting to account for the performance of his or her Portfolio.
- 2.8 PDS Committees are also involved in the budget setting process and provide considered comments and recommendations for the Executive to take account of when formulating the Council's annual budget. Similarly, PDS Committees also monitor in-year spend of budgets and raise concerns where there is any possibility of overspend or other issues affecting spending priorities.

Call-in

- 2.9 The call-in process is a key means by which PDS Committees can hold the Executive to account. Any five Councillors can call in a decision and prevent it from taking immediate effect until it has been re-considered by a PDS Committee. The Committee can then interview the Portfolio Holder and officers and consider whether the decision is appropriate, within the Council's policy framework, and whether it should be reconsidered. If the Committee feels that the decision should be reversed or altered, it can make a recommendation to the Executive, which then has to reconsider the matter.
- 2.10 At the time of writing, one call-in has been made in 202/23. The continued low level of call-in reflects an emphasis given to pre-decision scrutiny leading to better and more robust decisions which are less likely to be challenged.

4. Report from Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee

Chairman: Cllr. Simon Fawthrop

Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Sean Slator and Cllr Bob Evans

1. Introduction

In 2022/23 the Committee held 10 scheduled meetings. The regular meetings included the scrutiny of items to be decided at the Executive's meetings, in addition to matters reported to the directly to the Committee. I would also like to thank the members of the committee for their contributions and thank the Officer team, for their support across the year, including call overs and agenda setting as well as numerous adhoc meetings and briefings.

2. Scrutiny of the Executive and the Resources Portfolio Holder

The Committee's principal role is to scrutinize the decisions of the Executive and the Resources Portfolio Holder as well as holding the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive Officer and the Resources Portfolio Holder to account. This Committee has discharged its responsibilities diligently and competently during the year. I would like to thank all the above for their valuable contributions.

3. Review of Council Activities

The Committee has been very conscious of the need to reduce costs and has diligently scrutinized budget and capital programme reports and measures to bring costs under control, including overspends across some budget headings. The contracts register and the disposal of various surplus assets, the performance of the Council Tax support scheme and issues concerning homelessness and temporary accommodation, Treasury Management performance which continues in the top 10% of Local authority performances, the various invest-to-save projects, as well as details on the growth fund and investment fund initiatives and the risk register were also considered. The committee also considered the best use of assets and had a major report on the capital assets and the future HQ options to consider. Lastly the Council is undergoing a transformation programme to help shape the Council's future and change the way it does business, at every stage the programme needs to have the ability to roll back if the transformation leads to degradation in service to our residents. That does not mean to say that services cannot or should not be delivered differently to how they are delivered today.

4. Scrutiny of Contracts.

The Committee also reviewed the work of key supplier contracts including the IT Services contract provided by BT (as an employee of BT this was chaired by Cllr Slator, to avoid any conflict of interest). We also reviewed the work of Liberata, whilst it has been good to see the Liberata contract performing well and showing both good value for money and a good level of service, we have also looked at the ways in which they can add more value to their services. We will be looking at both contractors and consultants in the near future to help the drive towards permanent employees which help provide a more consistent service for Bromley's residents.

5. Outlook

The Government's cost reductions have continued to impact on the Council's finances. The task to find the savings necessary to balance the Council's budget has been a major factor across this year. By keeping on top of the cost pressures which include additional growth items, this year will be crucial in delivering a balanced budget in future years. The main challenge is closing the funding gap of £29.8 million by 2026/27, a lot of hard work remains to ensure the Council continues to set legal budgets over the coming years. On a positive note a Brexit bounce for the economy (predicted last

year), had just started prior to the coronavirus risk. As this risks becomes more of an issue, the Brexit bounce could be temporarily knocked off course.

6. Conclusions

The Council is now into a transformation phase, undergoing significant organizational and estate changes, whilst maintaining its ability to continue to provide services expected by residents. The era of streamlining, re-organizing and efficiencies, whilst continuing to provide services “as usual” is becoming harder and difficult decisions will now have to be taken about service provision. Statutory obligations will have to take precedence over providing discretionary support, but innovation and technologies such as AI might be able to help contain growth pressures.

The challenges for Bromley Council in the coming years are the need to make the wider public fully aware of the Council’s financial position of balancing on-going service pressures against a backdrop of challenging central Tax payer support to ensure that planning is in place for dealing with the budget gap in future years. This will include both cost reductions and revenue generation within the policies of managing resources well, the 2027 zero carbon target and the clean and green approach adopted by the Conservative administration.

Councillor Simon Fawthrop
Chairman, Executive & Resources PDS Committee

5. Report from Adult Care and Health PDS Committee

Chairman: Cllr. Mark Brock

Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Dr Sunil Gupta FRCP FRCPATH

Introduction

The Committee has met 4 times thus far this municipal year with a further meeting on the 15th March. Alongside the elected Members on the Committee we also have co-opted members representing Bromley Carers, Bromley Mental Health Forum and Bromley Experts by Experience.

Policy Development & Scrutiny

During the year the Committee reviewed various services and initiatives as well as decisions for the Executive and the Adults, Care and Health Portfolio Holder.

Key areas scrutinised by the Committee this year were:

- The Portfolio Plan
- Budget Monitoring, Capital Programme and Contracts Register
- Social Care Reforms
- Tackling Loneliness Strategy 2022-2026
- Integrated Sexual Health Tender
- Draft Budget 2023- 2024
- Learning Disability Short Breaks
- Housing Support Mental Health Services
- Integrated Support to Care Homes
- Advocacy Services
- Adults Substance Misuse
- Supported Living for Padua Road, Bromley Road and Brosse Way
- Adult Mental Health Recovery and Support@Home Service
- Mental Health Flexible Support Service
- Integrated Community Equipment Stores

Updates were received on the following:

- Public Health Management of the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Covid-19 Surge Capacity Support Nurses
- Extra Care Housing Schemes
- Learning Disability Complex Needs Day Service
- Bromley Safeguarding Adults Board 2021-2022
- Learning Disability Supported Living Services
- Domiciliary Care
- Infrastructure Support to Voluntary Services

Information Briefings were received on:

- Risk Register
- Assistive Technology

- Bromley Local Account 2021-2022
- CQC Improvement Plan for Bromley Healthcare
- Complaints & Compliments Annual Report 2021-2022
- Minutes from Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee Meetings

Key Areas Scrutinised:

Covid-19 Pandemic Response

The Public Health Department reported to the Committee on their management of the Covid-19 Pandemic through the implementation of their Bromley Outbreak Management Plan which was first published in June 2020. There were a number of workstreams overseeing different aspects of the plan and it have been updated several times. The Committee commended the Department for their excellent work, particularly in their partnership working to support care settings, which they were awarded a National MJ award for.

Tackling Loneliness Strategy

The Committee received two updates this municipal year on progress of the Tackling of the Tackling Loneliness Strategy Action Plan 2022-2026 which was launched in at the end of 2021. A full time member of staff was recruited this year to oversee this strategy, and it is also the focus of Cllr M Botting in his role as an Executive Assistant. The Committee particularly welcomed the growth of the Befriending Service and the ongoing expansion of the Bromley Simply Connect Database.

Bromley CQC Action Plan

Both the PDS and Health Sub-Committee received updates on the Bromley Healthcare CQC Action plan following their CQC rating deeming them as 'Requiring Improvement' in their inspection in February 2022. Both Committees were pleased to find that careful attention is being paid to the recommendations by the CQC, particularly around audit process and recruitment, and that work was being taken forward in a thorough manner.

Lastly, I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their hard work and excellent input this municipal year to our meetings.

Councillor Mark Brock
Chairman, Adult Care & Health PDS and Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee

6. Report from Children, Education & Families PDS Committee

Chairman: Cllr. Kira Gabbert

Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Jonathan Andrews

Introduction

Current year has been a busy one for the Committee. Increased demand for the services continued as longer-term effects of the Covid pandemic and associated lockdowns on families and children became apparent, with spiralling inflation and cost of living crisis adding additional challenges in all areas.

This report provides a summary of the activity of the Committee and work that has been undertaken to ensure Bromley maintains its position as one of the best boroughs to raise a family, delivering good services and support to children and young people and their families and carers.

Scrutiny

The Committee has a statutory responsibility to review annual reports of key services. As a result of changes introduced in a previous reporting cycle, 6-monthly reports are being provided to the Committee in the present cycle, although it is currently being considered if reporting should go back to the annual frequency.

This Committee reviewed the following reports to date – early intervention and family support; private fostering; adoption; corporate parenting; the virtual school; compliments and complaints report; youth justice service. As part of our regular scrutiny we also reviewed the work of the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP), Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) report and Independent Reviewing Officer annual report.

In addition, I and the vice-chairman have requested the department to produce a report on harmful effects of gambling and support that is available to affected children and young people in the borough. This will be provided to the Committee at the next meeting.

Engagement with children and young people

The Members feel it is vital to ensure that our young people remain engaged in the work of the Committee. Following my meeting with the Bromley Youth Council (BYC) representatives and the director of children's services, the Committee Members made a decision to co-opt two representatives of BYC as non-voting Members of the Committee. The Portfolio Holder and the officers welcomed the decision. This development has been incredibly positive for the Committee, with newly co-opted Members actively participating in the discussions, offering valuable insights and suggestions for improvements.

The Members also suggested that representatives of Living in Care Council (LinCC) and BYC and representatives of local schools' councils should be invited to participate more fully in the life of the Council, for example to be invited to attend the very important and poignant events such as Holocaust Remembrance Memorial, Armed Forces Day and similar.

Our role as corporate parents

The needs and experiences of the children and young people for whom Members have corporate parenting responsibility is always at the forefront of our decision-making process. In our roles as

corporate parents it is our vision that the children and young people we care for are protected, respected and fully supported and go on to live happy and fulfilled adult lives after leaving care.

Among many success stories is “Our House” that hosts the Living in Care Council (LinCC) and Changes for Care Leaver (CfCL) for their official meetings and various projects. I had a privilege of attending one of the meetings in February and had a first-hand experience of a positive impact of this initiative. Bromley care leavers Come Dine with Us project has been a great success, too, and is supported by the Mayor of Bromley.

This year’s Children Looked After Celebration of Achievement Awards Ceremony took place on 17th February at The Warren. This annual event is aimed at acknowledging the amazing progress the children have made. LinCC and CfCL treated the audience to an engaging presentation about the important work they do. The event was well attended by the Members of the Council which was very pleasing to see.

Virtual school

I was pleased to note the Virtual School’s role in promoting the education of children for whom we have corporate parenting responsibility. The Virtual School works to help every child to make progress in their learning through bespoke support, such as a post-16 years pilot scheme on the Bromley campus of London South East Colleges where staff delivered on-site support to young people. Personal Education Plans are in place until the end of Year 13 and this includes work to keep young people engaged with education, employment or training, including the “Fresh Start” scheme, mentoring and careers advice. A higher education mentoring programme is in place. Extensive support and mentoring is offered to young people interested in training or apprenticeship opportunities.

Families

The Committee reviewed the work of the Early Intervention and Family Support Services. A wide range of services and initiatives were delivered such as Bromley Children Project. Other initiatives included the Reducing Parental Conflict programme. An extensive range of free parenting courses is available at the Children and Family Centres, focussing on different skills and needs and age groups, from babies to teenagers.

Homes for Ukraine support

I also would like to separately recognise the extensive work of the department to support Ukrainian refugee families including the establishment of the Ukraine Support Hub. The war has displaced millions of Ukrainians. Hundreds of our Borough’s residents generously offered Ukrainian families a safe place to stay under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Many more arrived under the Family scheme. More than 200 children and young people who had moved to the Borough under the Homes from Ukraine scheme had been successfully placed in local schools with English language support courses made available to their families. The Committee Members actively followed this workstream throughout the current cycle.

SEND

Our SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) services remain crucial. Plans are in the development stage for a new Special Free School (ref Education section for more details). The Committee recommended that Phoenix Centre site can be used by Riverside, a Community Special School. This has created additional 16 specialist school places from September 2022 with the option for further additional places from September 2023.

Special Educational Needs transport transformation programme is underway.

Woodlodge is an independent living skills centre in Bickley and Sundridge Ward that supports the development of independence and social skills for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The facilities are utilised by three Bromley special schools: Marjorie McClure, Glebe, and Riverside, along with Bromley College, Nash College and CASPA (Children on the Autistic Spectrum Parents' Association). This provision is invaluable for our children and the report about future funding is coming to the Committee during the current cycle.

Education

School places

The Local Authority has an important role to ensure that there are enough school places for all children in the borough. The school places planning group met earlier in the year to assess the current situation and projections. Figures from this year's National Secondary Offer Day (as published on 01 March) reveal that the majority of Bromley school children once again received offers from their preferred secondary schools. Just under 91 per cent of Bromley's school children will be attending one of their top four choices of secondary school, with nearly 69 per cent offered their first preference. The figures demonstrate that our continued collaborative working with the borough's schools has ensured a sufficiency of places. A further meeting of the school place planning working group is scheduled for April 2023.

The officers continued to work with the Department for Education to establish a Special Free School within Bromley. Work is now progressing with a view to moving forward with a planning application.

Support for mental health

The Committee recognises the impact of the pandemic and successive lockdowns on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people over the past several years. The issues affecting families have been further exacerbated by the ongoing cost of living crisis. The Members acknowledge that this area represents a challenge and remains a priority. At the last meeting, I have proposed that the Committee undertake a deep dive on mental health provision for children and young people in the near future, including representation from Bromley Y and CAMHS, and this was supported by the Committee.

Budget

There are significant demand and cost pressures faced by the department. These had been considered in detail during the Budget Sub-Committee meeting held on 19 January 2023, chaired by Cllr Andrews.

Budget 2023/24

Members are aware that there is a clear need to make savings in future years. Service transformation would be a key mechanism to deliver the required savings via more efficient and cost-effective services, and the recent transformation of SEND transport provided a good example of a service being delivered more efficiently. Work is also ongoing to establish a new Special Free School in the Borough which is anticipated to provide a much needed in-borough offer to Bromley children whilst reducing the number of costly out-of-borough placements and associated costs such as transport.

Recruitment and retention of in-house social workers remains an area of primary focus of the department and the Committee is closely following the initiatives aimed at recruiting and retaining of the permanent personnel.

Dedicated Schools Grant

There is a significant deficit in the High Needs Block which reflects the experience of other local authorities across the country and in London. The officers had developed a Dedicated Schools Grant Recovery Management Plan in consultation with the Department for Education to address this and it is anticipated that the deficit position could be reduced over time as a result of the mitigating measures. This remains an area of focus for the department and the Committee.

Ofsted

Work is underway to prepare for expected Ofsted service inspections including recent mock Inspections of the Children's Service and Youth Justice Service.

Practice Observation Week

A Practice Observation Week was arranged in February 2023 and Committee Members were encouraged to attend. This was the first Practice Observation Week since we came out of the pandemic and it is hoped to hold this an annual basis from now on.

Final comments

The Committee has worked to deliver scrutiny in a timely manner to ensure excellent services are being delivered by the Council to all children and young people of the Borough and their families and carers. We are mindful of both the increasing demand and cost pressures on the services and are actively planning for the future. This includes continuous budget monitoring, ensuring enough school places are available including the specialist school places, implementing special educational needs innovative transport solutions, and focusing on employing and retaining excellent personnel – all aimed at making Bromley even better.

The Committee remains committed to ensuring that children and young people and their life experiences should always be central to our decision-making.

Councillor Kira Gabbert
Chairman, Children, Education and Families PDS Committee

7. Report from Environment and Community Services PDS Committee

Chairman: Cllr Will Rowlands

Vice-Chairman: Cllr Simon Fawthrop

A few days before I began writing this report, I was having a clear out of old papers. Within the pile was an old History essay I had written at A-Level, with Mr Minns' opening remark being 'This sounds to me like the thoughts of Chairman Rowlands!' A comment which I suppose finally has some relevance.

Before I divulge my thoughts on the year just gone - my first year serving as Environment PDS Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Conservative Group who elected me to the position of Chairman, and with it, placed their trust in me to help deliver for our residents some of the most vital services, within the most public of Council departments.

I would like to especially thank my Vice Chairman, the ever-supportive Cllr Fawthrop, along with the two Portfolio Holders, Cllr's Bennett and Cuthbert, who have proven to be an effective double act in their roles, with their enthusiasm for the jobs they do, alongside their co-operation making the role of my committee easier and more effective. I would also like to take this moment to thank all members of the committee from both the administration and opposition parties - who have, on the whole, ensured professionalism and respect is shown to other members, as well as the role we play in this element of the democratic process, with any disagreements being aired and in an amicable and non confrontational manner and resolved in good spirit.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to all the officers who directly report to the committee, as well as those who, despite not reporting and answering questions to committee, play an important role in obtaining information, carrying out research, and dealing with the public on a daily basis. Last but not least, thanks is owed to Steve Wood, the clerk, along with Colin Brand, who without their efforts, the purpose of the committee would be irrelevant.

This year has seen the Environment PDS scrutinise two Portfolio Holders for the first time. I promised members that I would report my findings and recommendations for a permanent way forward, which I shall do before the Annual Meeting of the Council.

This year, for the first time in the Environment PDS, I asked my successor as Executive Assistant, Cllr Turrell, the EA to Cllr Cuthbert to update us on his progress in the role. Cllr Turrell impressed members with his knowledge and commitment to the tasks he has been assigned - these being the works on the Kelsey Park bridge, as well as succeeding me in monitoring the performance of Fix my Street.

Over the course of this past year, My committee has overseen the scrutiny of the following Council contractors:

Glendale
Idverde
APCOA
Riney
Veolia

The scrutiny which we have undertaken has been extremely thorough with all members partaking in good debate. We have made it very clear when we are pleased with the service we are receiving from contractors and have also been very clear when we aren't pleased. When the latter has occurred, my committee has always done its best to ensure the criticism fed back to contractors is always constructive, with suggestions on ways to improve failing areas backed up with concrete evidence. All contractors are only criticised when there is a clear justification for doing so.

My committee has provided the following feedback to the following contractors:

Glendale - We identified failings in the service - notably a backlog which required the employment of a sub-contractor to help clear some of the workload. We accepted this was because of Storm Eunice, 16th- 19th February 2022, and allowed Glendale time to bring their workload back under control.

Idverde - We were extremely disappointed in the performance of this contractor for numerous reasons, some reasons mentioned in the report, other concerns raised by members were external to the report content. As Chairman, I felt I had no choice but to tell them we expected a significant improvement in their performance over the coming year.

Veolia - We were extremely pleased with Veolia and their performance over the past year. They have hit their targets, openly and enthusiastically worked with the Council, and gave my committee no cause for concern looking ahead to the future.

APCOA - This contractor provided the Council with an excellent performance over the past year, and a report update which was by far the best presentation we received from a contractor. APCOA have clearly taken on board the critical feedback we gave in the early years of this contract and have significantly improved the service they provide to us.

Riney - Both Riney and the committee agreed that the weather this winter has been the primary cause of the current backlog of works within the Borough. Despite this, it was pointed out to Riney that they have consistently underperformed for some time now and we expected to see an improvement in the upcoming year.

At the time of writing this, we are yet to have received our presentation from Fix my Street. This will be purely from a technological side as the Council is responsible for the service side.

I have also been in talks with Thames Water, UK Power Networks and Southern Gas Networks regarding these organisations making a visit to my committee. I feel it is important that we engage with these stakeholders as, whilst they aren't directly employed by the Council to carry out works, they are working on Council land and property, and their actions do have consequences on all our residents. These meetings will, depending on their availability, be included within a PDS meeting framework, or an open presentation with Q&A session with all members invited.

My committee has overseen the continuation of existing policies relating to tree planting, carbon strategy, and Road safety management amongst others. This is alongside creating new policies which will help the Council achieve our ambitious target of being carbon neutral by 2027.

My committee has also worked cross party to establish a strategy relating to a Wildflower Verge policy. A subcommittee was set up comprising of seven members of the main committee which agreed to a trial run of wild verges in eleven locations across the Borough.

Over the course of the next year, I look forward to seeing how policies such as the phasing out of parking metres, our tree management strategy, and our Wildflower Nature Verges progress, as well as working with all members as my committee continues its work to improve the services the Council provides within this department.

Councillor Will Rowlands
Chairman, Environment and Community Services PDS Committee

8. Report from Public Protection and Enforcement PDS Committee

Chairman: Cllr David Cartwright QFSM

Vice-Chairman: Cllr Kim Botting FRSA

The PP&E PDS has had a busy year scrutinising both the local authority and its partners' work in "Making Bromley Even Better". It has worked closely with council officers, the police and other partners within the Safer Bromley Partnership, to keep Bromley safe by protecting consumers and residents, supporting and regulating businesses, and protecting and improving our environment. By utilising an approach of support for our businesses and residents, along with assertive enforcement where necessary, Bromley continues to be one of the safest London Boroughs in which to live, work and visit. The breadth of the Committee's scrutiny work over the last year is wide and includes:

- **Safer Bromley Partnership (SBP) & Community Safety:** It has been a challenging year for our community and the different partners within the SBP. With regard to crime, there has been an increase in the total notifiable criminal offences in Bromley, especially in burglary, theft of and from motor vehicles and some crimes involving violence. However, on the more positive side, there have been decreases in knife crime offences and ASB calls. The PDS has continued to scrutinise the Police with particular emphasis around the reporting of their performance. This has not been an easy task due to changes in data sharing via MOPAC and lack of basic available information. The PDS has now asked the police and MOPAC for a review of data collection and publication, to ensure the Committee can see police performance clearly in future years. The PP&E PDS has also scrutinised other specific partners including the recently audited Probation Service, who presented their improvement action plan, following a recent inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate. The PDS also, scrutinised the MOPAC spending plan for projects which support community safety in the borough. Regarding our borough's identified local areas of deprivation, over the past year there have been 12 successful Community Impact Days concentrating on crime and ASB 'hotspots'. In addition, there have been 26 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts voluntarily implemented with young persons, aimed at ensuring engagement in behavioural change.
- **Statutory Noise Nuisance Out of Hours Service Review:** This is a project that will refocus this important service to cover times of most need. It will achieve this through the reorganisation of existing resources and the addition of two officers on duty who will, in real time, intervene on behalf of residents affected by excessive noise. With over 83 notices for noise nuisance served in 2022, this new service provision will enable the swifter resolution of issues, through engagement and, if necessary, formal enforcement measures.
- **Emergency Planning & Corporate Resilience:** During the last year, the Emergency Planning & Corporate Resilience team have provided a full range of training courses for staff and volunteers. Staff also took part in a live exercise with blue light partners at Biggin Hill Airport in November, where a number of operational scenarios were tested. The team also worked upon 23 real emergency incidents, the most notable was a Fire on the 15th Floor of St Mark's Square in Bromley, which saw 150 residents evacuated and a Council run rest centre opened. The team has just completed a testing and exercising programme for each Directorate, working through a number of scenarios including as a large fire at the Civic Centre, a cyber-attack, large scale industrial action by our suppliers and the emergence of a COVID variant and subsequent lockdown.
- **Food Safety & Hygiene Programme:** With over 2,750 food premises requiring inspection, Bromley are responsible for ensuring appropriate and safe food provision of these

establishments. The problems associated with the Covid Pandemic caused the cessation of food safety inspections of food businesses. The resulting backlog of existing food businesses requiring inspection and the number of new food businesses registering during this period grew significantly, as it did across London and indeed the country. Bromley's food safety officers have worked closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to develop an achievable and acceptable plan to reduce this backlog. This has been particularly difficult as there is, currently, a national shortage of available accredited and experienced food safety officers and recruitment to overcome this backlog has been a serious problem. The FSA are fully aware of, and acknowledge, this issue.

- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs): With an increasing demand over recent years for HMOs in Bromley, the PDS fully supported the recent strengthening of planning control for HMOs. This has improved the Council's ability to ensure HMOs are of good quality and not a nuisance to their neighbours. Over the past year, some 27 HMOs have applied for permission to continue to operate, with one known HMO held to account for not doing so. There are 234 licenced HMOs in Bromley, with a further 150 applications currently being processed. HMOs operating before the recent changes in planning regulations do not require retrospective planning permission.
- Trading Standards: This is an important area of the Council's responsibility. Trading Standards Officers have continued their highly regarded work over the past year. Through regular updates to local residents, warning of ongoing 'scams' such as cold calling, telephone and doorstep sales etc., they continue to support all Bromley residents and in particular the elderly and most vulnerable. Trading standards work is wide and varied and, by way of example, a recent key project involved the enforcement of regulations in privately rented properties in the borough. The PDS gave its support to the project outline and proposals, and then scrutinised the successful outcome of its introduction, which resulted in 8 formal investigations and 6 paid fines of £20,000.
- Environmental Enforcement & the Fly tipping Action Plan: The Committee has continued to support the Neighbourhood Management Team's commitment to keep the borough's streets clean and green, to reduce litter, fly tipping and dog fouling. They have undertaken a review of the services they provide to expand the deployment of contracted works, public education, and enforcement. Targets have been set to reduce the number of fly-tipping incidents in the borough per year and to take formal action against at least 10% of those responsible for fly-tips. Highlights of the year include a joint operation with Bromley Police resulting in the seizure of a number of vehicles during July 2022 and the prosecution of the owners. These vehicles were linked to a series of fly tipping offences in Bromley. The team have also instigated new cross-border arrangements with Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council.
- Parking Enforcement: Parking enforcement activities are undertaken in accordance with the Bromley Parking Strategy. This covers the management of public car parks, on-street parking, and civil parking enforcement. It also includes Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued by CCTV for school zigzag lines, bus stops and moving traffic contraventions, as well enforcing 'blue badge' fraud. When a PCN is issued, the registered keeper has a minimum of 2 chances to appeal and a formal representation can be made directly to the Council, where an authorised officer will investigate and respond in line with the parking appeal policy. If the appeal is rejected, the register keeper will have the opportunity to register their appeal with the Environment and Traffic Adjudicators (ETA) for an independent review of the PCN. In 21/22 80,941 PCNs were issued, 24,239 appeals were processed by the Council with only 239 cases heard by the adjudicator, of which only 38 were upheld.

This is but a small sample of the work of the PP&E PDS. Other areas of scrutiny undertaken over the past year include planning enforcement, the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy, the Council's Stray Dog Service Contract, the Bromley Youth Council and the performance of the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust in respect of public and community safety.

I would like to take this opportunity to, firstly, thank the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and

Enforcement for all her support and guidance over the past year. Secondly, I would thank all members who have served on the PP&E PDS for their enthusiastic contribution and wise counsel, which has ensured the continued safety of Bromley borough, its communities, and its local residents. Finally, I would like to place on record my sincere thanks and appreciation for the sterling work of all Council officers who have not only supported the PP&E PDS in carrying out its scrutiny function, but who continue to serve and support all those who live, work and visit our borough.

Cllr David Cartwright QFSM
Public Protection & Enforcement PDS Chairman

9. Report from Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee

Chairman: Cllr Tony Owen

Vice-Chairman: Cllr Keith Onslow

2022/3 has been a year of change and challenge for the RRH Scrutiny Committee, Portfolio Holder and Cabinet. If arbitrary housing targets continue ad infinitum there is a huge risk that the borough will be ruined in the eyes of local residents.

The 2022 Borough Elections saw the departure of 4 members of the Committee and the Portfolio Holder. 5 new members are not only new to the Committee but also first time Bromley councillors. Only 2 members remain from 2021/2 although the Chairman has now become the Portfolio Holder. The Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both new to the Committee but bring 40+ years of local council experience.

The year commenced with a comprehensive induction (all councillors invited) presented by both council officers and external partners. Thematic sessions were added to routine scrutiny business covering the Housing Revenue Account and partnership with Housing Associations.

Homelessness and the level of overnight accommodation required is an ongoing and massive challenge. Developers are predominantly building one bedroom flats whereas the need is primarily 2-3 bedrooms and above family accommodation. The Council has started building its own units and the Committee has been monitoring the progress and problems with contractors.

The future blueprint will be contained in the new Borough Plan (due 2024) - and Supplementary Planning Guidance which has been released for consultation in Bromley and Orpington. Strong public objection to high rise building has been raised across the Borough with a fear of Bromley becoming like Croydon or Lewisham. National Planning Guidance, the London and Local Plans are frequently at odds with one another and local opinion. Considerable lobbying of local MPs and government ministers has taken place but no sensible discussion between parties is discernible. Gareth Bacon MP presented a 10 minute rule bill to parliament <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/mp/gareth-bacon/bill/2021-22/unauthoriseddevelopmentoffences> and there is an expectation that this will be incorporated in the levelling up bill.

The PDS and Development Control Committees have been and will be taking an active part in shaping plans. Ad infinitum housing targets, and no planning concept of a place being full, give options of building on the green belt, building up or knocking down properties on large plots and cramming in new development.

The Scrutiny Committee has reviewed the Borough's property portfolio and noted the maintenance/refurbishing/rebuilding/sell requirements and options. The contract terms for West Wickham pool and library have been approved. Plans for the Churchill Theatre and Walnuts Leisure Centre are subject to consultation and consideration. A proposal to move the Council's main offices into the Direct Line building is being prepared. These and other schemes will be examined and recommendations made to the Executive (decision making) committee.

The above is a summary of the main changes and challenges. The ambitious refurbishment of Crystal Palace Park has been approved and progress continues to be monitored. The relocation of Mottingham and Cray learning shops are among many other items that have been subject to scrutiny and recommendations.

Councillor Tony Owen
Chairman, Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee