

# **Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee Annual Report 2010-11**

Chairman: Cllr. Sarah Phillips

Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Michael Tickner

## **Introduction**

The Committee will have met 6 times this year. Each meeting has scrutinised the reports for decision by the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder and considered policy development of key areas of the portfolio, with the exception of the January 2011 meeting which only considered the draft Council budget for 2011/12. Monitoring performance against the Renewal and Recreation Department's Building a Better Bromley priorities has been central to the committee's work. There have been two working groups which have enabled a thorough investigation of key issues.

## **Working Groups**

The main focus this year has been Bromley North Village and the Library Service. Some additional work associated with the Beckenham and West Wickham Town Centre working group has also been undertaken during this year.

## **Employment and Skills**

In December 2010 Members considered a report and received a presentation from Simon Norton, Principal at Orpington College, about a revitalised proposal for **the merger of Bromley and Orpington Colleges**. The proposal drew upon joint work already undertaken by the Colleges between 2007 and 2009. This work was endorsed at the time by the London Borough of Bromley, local MPs and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The original rationale for merger still remains and the Colleges believed the case was now even more compelling in the light of increased pressures on Further Education (FE) funding. Following Skills Funding Agency approval of the colleges' Draft Proposal at the end of December 2010, consultation was due to take place in January/February 2011 and, if successful, approval to establish the merged college is expected by early summer 2011. Members recommended that the Portfolio Holder endorses continued Local Authority support of the college merger proposal.

The Committee was provided with an update on the **Thyme Out project** which aims to improve the life chances of adults with learning disabilities. External funding was previously provided for the project

from the Big Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund. In discussion reference was made to the Thyme Out scheme being an excellent project; it resulted in a detailed standard of grounds maintenance at the Civic Centre and acknowledgement was given to the contribution provided by helpers and assistants. The Portfolio Holder referred to the project being an admirable scheme which he felt was well run and he asked for his best wishes to be taken back to those involved.

In October 2010 the Committee received the final report on **People into Employment (PiE)**. This project was established by the Council to reach its stretch target on worklessness during 2007-10 agreed as part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Members received a summary of the final outcomes with reference given to opportunities that could be considered for giving further support to the PiE target group. The target agreed in 2006 was to assist 100 residents in receipt of incapacity or lone parent related benefit for six months or more into sustained employment (16 hours per week for at least 13 weeks.) Members noted that the actual figure achieved was 75, which was a good achievement in spite the worsening economic conditions during this period, and potentially securing £163,125 in reward money for the Council.

## **Town Centres**

In June Members considered some additional work associated with the Committee's working Group **on Beckenham and West Wickham Town Centres**. The further work related to recommendations of the Working Group concerned with environmental considerations at the town centres; estimated revenue and capital costs associated with those recommendations were highlighted for officer consideration along with a further refinement of the recommendations to the Environment Portfolio Holder. However, the R&R PDS Members wished to retain a close interest in the outcomes of the Working Group report – and have therefore asked that updates on developments in Beckenham, West Wickham and also Penge be included in the work programme for 2011/12.

The Committee has continued its review of the major proposals for Bromley and Orpington Town Centres.

In June the Committee heard about the options for redevelopment of **Bromley Museum at the Priory in Orpington** after the planned relocation of the Library. Members heard that the preferred option was to utilise the space both to extend the museum offer and improve visitor facilities, alongside providing space for small professional business use such as those already in existence in the Priory

outbuildings. In addition to supporting local employment, Members were informed that this could act as a catalyst for regenerating the immediate area around the Priory and its gardens providing an opportunity to attract financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. This could have the effect of creating an 'arts and heritage zone' at the southern end of Orpington High Street. An outline scheme, with an estimated cost of £2.5m, had been developed meeting all the above criteria, as well as addressing original comments from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Noting progress on the **Area Action Plan for Bromley Town Centre and the Masterplan for Orpington** (the Area Action Plan received approval at Full Council in October 2010), Members were advised that the next stage in the development process was a focus on implementation and to ensure that the development proposals contained in the AAP could be developed and delivered in accordance with the proposed phasing. The Committee was provided with the copy of a draft Development Programme, which outlined how this would be achieved for both Bromley and Orpington town centres. The key issue in securing good quality developments would be identifying funding to secure the appropriate specialist advice. Members endorsed the approach outlined in the draft Development Programme and supported the plans to draw on specialist development expertise and advise.

The Committee has also been kept up to date throughout with the proposals for **improvements to Bromley North Village**. Working with local stakeholders, officers had prepared a draft Renewal Strategy for the area to inform and provide direction for developing individual projects in the Plan. The draft Strategy sought to provide a wider strategic overview of renewal ambitions for the area as well as setting the longer term vision and objectives. Bromley North Village was selected in November 2009 for inclusion in the Mayor's Great Spaces Initiative and Transport for London (TfL) had adopted a competitive bidding process to select the most innovative and imaginative schemes. Members were informed in December 2010 that this bid had been successful and funding has now been provided to develop a detailed design for the area.

The Committee agreed that Member input to the development of the Renewal Strategy would be valuable and a Member Working Party chaired by me was set up in June to look in detail at certain aspects of this, including community safety issues, wayfinding and branding for the Village. At the February 2011 meeting it was agreed that the Town Centre Member Working Party would be designated as the main Member forum for the project to provide Member oversight and strategic guidance. Members of the Committee's Working Party will be invited to attend

the TCMWP for these considerations and further updates will be provided to the Committee.

In February 2011 the Committee considered a report summarising proposals for **Town Centre Management activities** planned for 2011/12, including events and Christmas lights, and requesting that sufficient resources be made available from the Portfolio Initiatives Fund to deliver the planned activities. The report also proposed a reduction in the net expenditure by the Council on Town Centre activities during the 2011/12 financial year, to be offset by seeking additional contributions from the private sector. The Portfolio Holder was being asked to recommend to the Executive that the expected under spend of £53,400 could be carried forward and allocated for Town Centre Management and also approve the permanent viring of a sum of £50,000 from the Portfolio Initiative Fund for use on the proposed activities from 2011/12 onwards. Members approved of the proposal to reduce the overall level of funding in favour of finding additional contributions from businesses and endorsed Council support for most of the activities proposed in the report, including the plans to celebrate the Queens Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

### **Economic Recession & Business Support Programme**

The year has seen the continuation of difficult economic conditions, nationally and locally. The Committee has actively kept abreast of the impact on the Borough and the support and help that the Council and its partners can provide to its communities, in particular to local businesses.

Regular economic updates have provided evidence to the Committee of the economic position and helped in its scrutiny of policy and projects.

The Committee has in the past supported several measures to **support businesses** through the recession. The Committee was provided with a report on the outcomes of these, including the Supply Bromley project to encourage local businesses into the Council and public sector supply chain. This initiative in particular was applauded by Members as providing a practical way for the Council to support businesses. Members endorsed plans to renew the Coaching for High Growth project - which provides subsidised support to assist local businesses to overcome barriers to growth – the hosting of a borough wide ‘Boost Your Business’ event (with the introduction of an entrance fee) and extension of procurement support projects. In addition Members welcomed the proposal to seek the development of a high profile inward investment show case event for the borough – which would

highlight the advantages of the borough as a business location and 'sell' the development sites arising across the borough, particularly following the adoption of the Bromley AAP.

## **Leisure and Culture**

The Committee considered the **Bromley Mytime Leisure Trust Draft Service Delivery Plan** for 2011/12 including Bromley Mytime's Annual Partnership Plan for 2011/12, details of Bromley Mytime's five-year Investment Fund proposal and details of Bromley Mytime's pricing proposals for 2011/12. Mr Dennis Barkway, Chairman of Bromley Mytime introduced the item and Mr Steve Price, Chief Executive of Bromley Mytime gave an overview. The ensuing discussions took in pricing, the impact of the Olympics on demand and possible future funding and the funding of capital improvements at dual use centres. Members supported the Service Delivery Plan and Investment Fund Programme of works for 2011/12.

Contracts for the refurbishment of the **Pavilion Leisure Centre** (including the introduction of a ten-pin bowling alley) and for the operation of the **Churchill Theatre** were scrutinised by the committee in October 2010.

In June 2010, Members agreed to establish a Working Group to consider the future delivery of the Borough's **Library Service**, chaired by me. In February 2011 The Committee considered a report summarising the findings of the Working Group which outlined four options for the future development of the Library Service. Members discussed the various options and agreed that option 4 should be explored further in line with the recommendation of the Working Group. This involved working in partnership with Bexley to develop a shared service across both boroughs, with the potential for attendant back office and management savings. It was understood by Members that nothing could be ruled in or out, including the issue of whether any branch libraries would need to close or amalgamate with other service points. Members expressed support for the overall proposal but some had reservations over the possible closure of libraries. Members asked that a further report around Option 4 providing detailed costs and savings be provided to the next meeting Committee.

## **Property Matters**

In December 2010 Members considered a report related to the 12 **Council owned Shopping Parades** of estate shops (141 shop units) built as part of housing estate schemes in the 1950's to provide facilities for the day to day requirements of local residents. The Council sub-lets

these to individual shopkeepers and small businesses most of which are local traders although there are some multiple traders. It was a matter of whether retaining these properties in the Council's ownership was providing best value to the Council tax payer. Members were informed that the shops currently produced a good net return to the Council when measured against their indicative capital values. Overall this was currently estimated at 9.2% and it was anticipated this would improve further when the voids were reduced over the next few months – and Members noted that this is a better rate of return than could be obtained currently by investing the capital receipts on the money market. In the light of this Members were supportive of retaining the shopping parades in Council ownership.

### **Performance Monitoring and Budget Monitoring Reports**

The Committee has received regular performance monitoring and budget monitoring reports. The delivery of the Local Area Agreement employment target was the subject of a specific report. The Committee also received a report from Internal Audit regarding the Value for Money scoring for Building Control – which was judged to be a level 3, meaning that Value for Money requirements were being substantially met by that service.

In January 2011 Members considered a **draft 2011/12 Budget** for the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio incorporating cost pressures and additional saving options as reported to the Executive on 12th January 2011. The Executive requested that each PDS Committee consider the proposals arising from the report to its 12th January meeting entitled "The Local Government Finance Settlement 2011/12 to 2012/13 and Related Budget Issues". For the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio, commentary was provided on the position for five areas namely the Cotmandene and Mottingham shops, the Field Studies Centre, the Adult Education Centre, income from Planning Applications and income from Building Control. Savings options across the Portfolio were also detailed for the consideration of Members. The scale of the cuts proposed across the Council were emphasised to Members. There was much discussion regarding the savings proposals outlined for the Portfolio and there was particular concern that the effects of proposed cuts to the Arts Council grant and to the Planning Enforcement section should be mitigated. Recommendations to the Executive reflected these particular concerns.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion it has been an interesting and exciting year for the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee and I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their input and support. I would also like to thank all Officers in the Renewal and Recreation Department who I have enjoyed working with.

Cllr. Sarah Phillips  
Chairman, Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee