

**Decisions of the Business Management
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

5 September 2011

Present:

Councillor Hugh Rayner (Chairman)
Councillor Brian Salinger (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Maureen Braun	* Kath McGuirk
* Dean Cohen	* Alison Moore
* Jack Cohen	* Barry Rawlings
* Brian Gordon	* Rowan Turner

*denotes Member present

Also in attendance:

Councillor Brian Coleman – Cabinet Member for Environment
Councillor Richard Cornelius – Leader of the Council
Councillor Tom Davey – Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Robert Rams – Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships
Councillor Reuben Thompstone (for agenda item 10)

1. MINUTES (Agenda Item 1):

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2011 be approved.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (Agenda Item 2):

None.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 3):

Member:	Subject:	Interest Declared:
Councillor Kath McGuirk	Agenda Item 6 (Call-ins – Strategic Library Review)	Personal but non-prejudicial interest as a Member of the Board of the Artsdepot.

The Chairman announced a variation to the order of the agenda. Items 8 (Regeneration Strategy), 10 (Fostering Recruitment Task and Finish Group) and 9 (Housing Strategy) would be considered before item 4 (Public Question Time).

4. REGENERATION STRATEGY (Agenda Item 8)

The Leader of the Council presented the Regeneration Strategy, scheduled to be reported to Cabinet on 14 September 2011. The Leader advised the Committee that the Strategy provided an overview of current regeneration in the borough and the strategic objectives for the successful future delivery of regeneration schemes.

The Committee were requested to consider the Regeneration Strategy and make comments and/or recommendations for the Cabinet to consider alongside the Strategy document at the Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that the following comments and recommendations be reported to Cabinet on 14 September 2011 for consideration alongside the Regeneration Strategy:

- 1. Cabinet be requested to note the concern of the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding affordable housing targets had been missed on some of the regeneration estates and, on some estates, delays in the provision of community facilities. The Committee requested that affordable housing be front-loaded in developments and that issues relating to community facilities are addressed in the implementation of the Strategy.**
- 2. Cabinet be requested to ensure that the Regeneration Strategy is regularly reviewed and refreshed to ensure that it is responsive to changing economic circumstances.**
- 3. Cabinet note the importance of delivering infrastructure improvements as part of the regeneration schemes to ensure that local infrastructure is able to cope with increased demands.**
- 4. Cabinet be requested to provide the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee with:**
 - details of plans for the future financing of regeneration schemes following the discontinuation of the Barnet Bond; and**
 - a funding forecast for the period of the Regeneration Strategy.**
- 5. Cabinet note the concerns of a Committee Member that recent changes to parking arrangements/charges and the possible closure of library buildings will have an impact on the regeneration of the boroughs high streets.**

5. FOSTERING RECRUITMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP (Agenda Item 10)

The Committee considered the final report of the Fostering Recruitment Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that the revised recommendations of the Fostering Recruitment Task and Finish Group (as set out in paragraph 9.9 of Enclosure A) be agreed by the Committee and forwarded to the meeting of the Cabinet on 14 September 2011 for consideration, subject to the amendment of recommendation 2 as follows:

“That the Fostering Team, as a means of enabling contact and mutual support among foster carers:

- (i) should ensure the engagement of experienced foster carers to develop a support network for newly recruited foster carers via the proposed buddy scheme; and
- (ii) should identify suitable council properties in the borough to enable foster carers to bring children with them to assist in providing local support groups that meet their needs as foster carers may not be able to attend regular meetings of the Foster Carers Support Group due to childcare commitments.”

6. HOUSING STRATEGY (Agenda Item 9)

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the Housing Strategy, scheduled to be reported to Cabinet on 14 September 2011. The Cabinet Member advised the Committee that following changes to national housing and related policies, the Council's Housing Strategy, agreed in April 2010, had been updated.

The Committee were requested to consider the updated Housing Strategy and make comments and/or recommendations for the Cabinet to consider alongside the Strategy document at the Cabinet meeting.

The Committee noted an amendment to page 16 (Impact of Demographic Changes) as follows:

Delete “Each older person costs on average £12,000 a year” and replace with “Each older person needing support costs on average £12,000 a year”; and

RESOLVED that the following comments and recommendations of the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reported to Cabinet on 14 September 2011 for consideration alongside the Housing Strategy:

1. **Cabinet note that the Committee support the national policy changes to occupation rules which will enable the social housing stock to be better utilised for residents in housing need.**
2. **Cabinet note that the concern of the Committee regarding the reduction in the number of family size dwellings in housing developments and request that the Council ensure appropriate linkages between the planning and housing functions to encourage an increase in family accommodation in the borough.**
3. **Cabinet be requested to:**
 - **incorporate timescales for the delivery into the Housing Strategy;**
 - **enable the Committee pre-scrutinise the Strategic Tenancy Policy in advance of its institution in March 2012;**
 - **incorporate into recommendation 1.1 of the Cabinet report the key drivers behind the revision of the Housing Strategy, as set out on page 7 of the strategy document.**

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (Agenda Item 4)

Details of the questions asked and the answers provided are appended to these decisions. Verbal responses were given to supplementary questions at the meeting.

8. MEMBERS ITEMS (Agenda Item 5)

None.

9. COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION (Agenda Item 7)

None.

10. MATTERS REFERRED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO KEY DECISIONS (Agenda Item 6):

(A) Cabinet on 26 July 2011:

The Committee considered the following decision of the Cabinet meeting held on 26 July 2011 and asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships in respect of the following:

Decision Item No:	Subject:
5	Report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships Strategic Library Review

The Committee decided not to refer the above matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

(B) Delegated Powers Report – 5 August 2011:

The Committee considered the following delegated decision taken by the Cabinet Member for Environment on 5 August 2011 and asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Environment in respect of the following:

Delegated Powers Report Reference:	Subject:
1375	Report of the Cabinet Member Environment Re-provision of Parking Services

The Cabinet Member for Environment undertook to:

- provide details of the current PayPoint locations to Committee Members;
- provide details of actual and projected parking income; and
- provide details of the Parking Services tender specification documentation to Committee Members who request the information (in accordance with the provisions of the Access to Information Rules set out in the Council's Constitution)

The Committee decided not to refer the above matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

11. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS / SCRUTINY PANELS – RECOMMENDATION TRACKING (Agenda Item 11)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the implementation of recommendations made by overview and scrutiny task and finish groups and panels accepted by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the Committee note the information contained within the report and appendix in relation to the progress made in implementing overview and scrutiny task and finish group / panel recommendations.**
- 2. the Committee request that an update on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Task and Finish Group, reported to Barnet's Safer Communities Partnership Board, be presented to the 17 October 2011 meeting.**
- 3. the Committee request that an update on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Housing Allocations Overview and Scrutiny Panel be presented to the 16 November 2011 meeting**

12. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS / SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE (Agenda Item 12)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the position relating to the currently convened task and finish groups and overview and scrutiny panels.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the Committee note the progress of the currently convened task and finish groups and overview and scrutiny panels as set out in the report.**

13. CABINET FORWARD PLAN (Agenda Item 13)

The Committee considered the Cabinet Forward Plan for the period September to November 2011.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.**

14. BUSINESS MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 14)

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Work**

Programme, as set out in the Appendix, be agreed.

15. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 9.56pm

Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Agenda Item 4, Public Questions

Mr Laurence Berg	
<u>Question 1 – Re-provision of Parking Services</u> If Barnet Council are proposing to allow people to buy parking tickets in around 80 locations in Barnet have they considered that some locations may be some distance from where the driver's car is parked and it may take at least five minutes from parking the car, walking to the shop, buying the ticket (assuming that there is no queue) and then walking back to the car to put the ticket in? In those five minutes or more a parking fine may be administered by nearby Parking Enforcement Officers.	<u>Response to Question</u> Civil Enforcement Officers are highly trained and before issuing a Penalty Charge Notice for non payment of the fee in any permitted parking place will observe the vehicle for a period of at least three minutes. This 'Observation Period' allows them to look for the driver and for any motorist currently engaged in a transaction to complete payment and authorise the parking, whether at a machine or by telephone. Arrangements have been made to monitor the effectiveness of this protocol when PayPoint is available as an additional method of payment, and to adjust the Observation Period as necessary. If any changes are required these can be implemented across the borough or locally where specific issues have arisen. In addition, the Council will continue to take a pragmatic approach in those cases where the transaction time is close to the time of issue of the PCN and will resolve these as and when they arise.
Mr Keith Martin	
<u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u> Can you give me a categorical assurance that, should any libraries in the borough be closed, there will be no gap in the service available to library users before any replacement libraries in the area are fully functional?	<u>Response to Question</u> We expect to provide a graduated move over a period of time from the current library service to the new model outlined in our strategy. That will mean that some library services – for example, rhymetime, young people's activities and some book loans – will be able to 'go live' in new facilities before others can. At the same time, the new library facilities will provide enhanced services compared to those currently available. So it is not a question of keeping one library open until another is ready. In practice, that might mean that there will be a period of time between the closure of one facility and a new facility becoming fully functional. This

	period will be kept to the minimum possible.
Ms Sheri Darby	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Could you please give me a straight Yes, No answer to the following:- Wouldn't you agree that closing libraries is in direct contravention to your first core objectives:</p> <p>"Increasing reading, literacy and learning opportunities for children" "Promoting reading and learning opportunities for adults"</p>	<p><u>Response to Question</u></p> <p>No. The new library service will: improve services and spaces for children and teenagers, including study space; increase the number of books the service buys; invest in our staff to better support children and young people; ensure all primary-aged children are library members; develop volunteering to offer a greater range of activities and events; offer an extended range of homework clubs and learning activities; extend opening hours; develop reading schemes for people with low levels of literacy; and equip staff with skills to better promote and support reading and literacy.</p>
Mr Martin Russo	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Our libraries cost less than 1% of the overall budget of Barnet, one of the richest boroughs in the country.</p> <p>We had over 3,000 signatures on a petitions signed to keep Friern Barnet library open and our initiatives to integrate with local schools and community organisations has shown the potential of our library services.</p> <p>We hope the committee gives further consideration to the Equality impact assessment report and note Barnet's obligations, under the Equality Act to meet the needs of local resident in Friern Barnet. My concern is that it's closure will have a detrimental effect on the most vulnerable groups in our community. It could potentially discriminate against them. I ask the committee to recommend that the Barnet's Cabinet reconsider keeping our library open in light of the risk to not meet its statutory obligations of an accessible local library for all. Would the committee be willing to reassure local residents that the</p>	<p><u>Response to Questions</u></p> <p>The Strategic Library Review has been called-in by Councillor Rawlings and his stated objective is that the item should be referred back to Cabinet with two additional recommendations, including one which requests that closures be deferred until a further decision is taken by Cabinet. The Committee will be giving their due consideration to this request and the reasons for the Cabinet's decision when this matter is dealt with later on in the meeting.</p>

<p>cabinet will reconsider the current proposal to close the our library?</p> <p><u>Question 2 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Does the committee agree that it would potentially generate more income for Friern Barnet library to remain open rather than closed?</p>	
<p>Ms Fiona Cochrane</p>	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Recent announcements from the Institute have revealed that no detailed discussions ever took place regarding the future housing of library stock and the Institute has now said no to this proposal; statements from the artsdepot have revealed, similarly, that no detailed dialogue has ever taken place with Barnet Council.</p> <p>In light of this, does the Council acknowledge that the Consultation misled the public regarding future provision being in place and does the Council acknowledge that residents’ serious concerns about the future provision of a meaningful, accessible library service are well-founded?</p>	<p><u>Response to Question</u></p> <p>Partnerships with both the Institute and artsdepot have been discussed over a period of time with both organisations. The Institute is currently considering its position. Proposals for a joint artsdepot-library are more advanced, with a project team in place, jointly overseen and sponsored by a Council Assistant Director and the artsdepot Chief Executive. The outcome of this stage of the work will be a comprehensive proposal for an integrated facility, including architectural designs, to be considered by Cabinet Resources Committee and the artsdepot board.</p>
<p>Mr Harry Gluck</p>	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Do the Council consider that they will be keeping to the spirit of the legal requirement to provide a good library service by closing two libraries and not opening any replacement within a committed timescale?</p>	<p><u>Response to the Question</u></p> <p>Yes. The development of a new site with the artsdepot will increase access to library services and improve the quality of service we can provide.</p>
<p>Ms Maureen Ivens</p>	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>My question refers to the recent riots in London. The Borough of</p>	<p><u>Response to the Question</u></p> <p>The proposals for a new library in partnership with the artsdepot offer an opportunity for an improved service for Barnet residents,</p>

Barnet was affected and the Police Commander for the Borough was even quoted in the local press as requesting residents to remain at home. In a previous question to Councillors I referred to the need for our local library to remain open to provide facilities for job seekers (reference materials, computers, trained staff etc.). Young rioters expressed anger at the lack of public facilities for them and one ingredient in the mix of fierce rage was frustration at university fees which many feel will deter young people from less affluent backgrounds from embarking on higher education. Many think English society has become more polarised between the 'haves' and the 'have nots': what is indisputable is that a very high percentage of people living in the area of Friern Barnet are living in poverty and that Barnet Council is seeking to deprive the Borough of three libraries. Poverty among the children and young people of this area should, surely, be of huge concern to Barnet Council.

Our libraries in the Borough are not only vital for job seekers but also for those termed NEETS (people who are not in education, employment or training) who can find information about ways to change their lives in these sanctuaries of information. Analysis by the Guardian newspaper recently of rioting suspects within the judicial system showed that there was a very close correlation between child poverty and lack of educational opportunity (as well as youth unemployment). We are living in hugely difficult times of recession, unemployment and uncertainty and only a tiny percentage of the population of England is free from such worries. Given the riots can the Council agree that it is an error to shut down any libraries in the borough because by so doing it would be exacerbating the social and cultural deprivation that found violent expression in the August 2011 disturbances?

with greater access to the internet for people who do not have it at home. While the equalities impact assessment identifies some impact on people in Friern Barnet, the mitigating factors in the strategy are strong. Also, while there are disadvantaged areas of Friern Barnet, they are concentrated in the area around South Friern Library, which will not be affected by any changes. Furthermore, I do not believe any rioters were spurred on by frustration at a lack of library facilities.

Tamar Andrusier	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Is the Council aware of the continuing, widespread public outrage at the prospect of our well-loved and much-needed local libraries being closed?</p> <p><u>Question 2 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Is the Council aware that in other boroughs the planned closure of libraries is subject to Judicial Review?</p>	<p><u>Response to Question 1</u></p> <p>We are very aware of the public debate that has taken place across the country, not just in Barnet. We believe that our strategy does not simply try to reduce costs and service levels, as is the case in many other councils. On the contrary, it will provide a service that fits the needs of Barnet’s residents into the future.</p> <p><u>Response to Question 2</u></p> <p>We are aware of Judicial Review proceedings in other areas. We believe that our approach has been thorough and robust. Each element of the strategy is based on evidenced analysis of need and current levels of service effectiveness and efficiency, and our decisions have taken into account thorough equalities impacts assessments for each proposal as well as for the strategy as a whole.</p>
Mrs Anne Storey	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>What promise can they give us that a) the replacement will materialise in two years and that b) it will be fit for purpose and a real improvement on what we have now in North Finchley and Friern Barnet?</p> <p><u>Question 2 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>If 'yes' do they have the authority and purpose to follow this through and stick to promises made?</p> <p>If 'no' why are they meddling with what we have now, that could work given some imagination and thought by those who are meant to be our public leaders, doing what their voters ask of them?</p>	<p><u>Response to Question 1</u></p> <p>I can assure residents that a new library service for North Finchley will be available within two years and will provide excellent, modern library services.</p> <p><u>Response to Question 2</u></p> <p>Cabinet’s decision on 26th July was sufficient authority to proceed.</p>

<p><u>Question 3 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Why do the council not want to improve the access of their voting citizens to council services by beefing up what is in place now? So much more could be done with the fabric already in place at the current Friern Barnet Library. The 'short-termism' attitude of this council and consequent selling off of the family silver do not show a true understanding of what the voters want.</p>	<p><u>Response to Question 3</u></p> <p>We believe that a new facility in North Finchley will provide a greater range of services, in greater volume than is available at present. Moreover, our consultation showed that current library service customers thought that developing the linkage between library, arts and cultural services would be a very positive development. The evidence shows that customers will travel greater distances in order to make use of modern, extensive library services, and the artsdepot is a very accessible location.</p>
<p>Tim Redmond</p>	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Robert Rams stated at the Cabinet meeting in July that the new library planned for the Arts Depot will be one of the biggest and best in London. I am very excited to visit this new library and have made a list of some of London's other great libraries that I have visited in the past:</p> <p>British Library (14,000,000 books) Barbican Library (listening facilities and a practice piano) Westminster Library (the largest public music library in the south of the UK) The London Library (the world's largest independent lending library) City Business Library (the UK's leading public library for free business information) University of London Library Science Museum Library Wellcome Library</p> <p>Which of these is closest to the model you have for the new artsdepot library?</p>	<p><u>Response to Question1</u></p> <p>The partnership with the artsdepot will give us the opportunity not just to provide excellent library services in an excellent building but also to bring out the synergies between the type of work the artsdepot does and that of the library service. Both organisations are particularly excited about these opportunities to create a whole that is greater the sum of the two parts we have at present. We foresee taking the best of both services and building on them.</p>

<p><u>Question 2 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>I understand that the stock of North Finchley and Friern Barnet libraries would be amalgamated to form the content of the new artsdepot library. However, I have also heard that at various times the stock of Friern Barnet Library has been offered to residents' groups and the North London International School. I am concerned that whilst the artsdepot is a large space, without any books it may not fulfil its function as a library.</p> <p>As part of the SLR, £10,000 has been set aside for new books. This equates to around 3p per Barnet resident. Allowing £6.99 per book, this would buy 1,430 books to share between the 338,100 residents of Barnet.</p> <p>How many books (approximately) will allow the artsdepot to qualify as one of London's biggest and best libraries and what is the allocated budget?</p> <p><u>Question 3 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>Is the council aware that on Robert Rams' website he asks:</p> <p>Why should we be running a reference collection when half the borough can access Google on their phones?</p> <p>Is the public to therefore understand that we will not be provided with a reference library?</p>	<p><u>Response to Question2</u></p> <p>A library service is about far more than books, despite the fact that books and reading will remain at the heart of our future service. There are many routes to learning and literacy and our libraries should provide a great many of them, both formal and informal. The best way I know of measuring the size of a library, therefore, is not the number of books it holds, but instead by the number of people who use it. Equally, our customers are the best judge of value and quality. The evidence in the Strategic Library Review suggests that the service we intend to establish with the artsdepot and the number of people we expect to visit the new centre will support the view that this will be one of the biggest and best.</p> <p><u>Response to Question 3</u></p> <p>The reference sections of libraries will still be available but it is true to say that fewer and fewer of them are used regularly. I talk about Google because the internet is undoubtedly most people's first port of call for reference material. That is why the strategic library review emphasises the need for libraries to invest in technology to facilitate access to the web, not just invest in book stock.</p>
<p>Ms Joanna Fryer</p>	
<p><u>Question 1 – Strategic Library Review</u></p> <p>What criteria are the Council looking for in residents' proposals to save Friern Barnet Library?</p>	<p><u>Response to Question 1</u></p> <p>The Cabinet's decision on 26 July was to:</p> <p>"Proceed to implement the strategy as set out in the report subject to the consideration of the feasibility of any community initiatives that come forward from residents on or before 31 October 2011."</p>

Consideration of the feasibility of any community initiative is likely to include some of the following areas:

Financial and property considerations

The proposal can be delivered at no cost to the council or low cost to the council, with a workable financial plan and realistic budget, and clarity on where services are proposed to be provided from and how they are provided by the community group.

Strategic and community considerations

Indication that the proposal is supported locally and that the facility or services reflects local community needs.

Services and sustainability

To highlight the services to be provided by the community initiative and the ongoing benefits; and a proposal which is realistic in what it proposes to deliver, adequately resourced, and with recognition of potential risks, challenges, and identifying some success factors for the proposed services.