

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

20 November 2012

Members Present:-

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

Councillor Maureen Braun	Councillor Alison Moore
Councillor Jack Cohen	Councillor Barry Rawlings
Councillor Brian Gordon	Councillor Andrew Strongolou
Councillor Kath McGuirk	

Also in attendance

Councillor Dean Cohen – Cabinet Member for Environment  
Councillor David Longstaff – Cabinet Member for Safety and Resident Engagement  
Councillor Robert Rams – Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner  
Councillor Tom Davey – Cabinet Member for Housing

## **1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

## **2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS**

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner.

## **3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

None.

## **4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None.

## **5. MEMBERS' ITEMS**

None.

**6. ANY MATTERS REFERRED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO KEY DECISIONS MADE BY:**

None.

**7. COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION**

None.

The Chairman announced a variation to the order of the agenda with the items being taken in the following order:

- Item 10 (Stop The One Barnet Programme – Executive Response)
- Item 9 (Reverse Parking Charges Petition)
- Item 10 (Housing Allocations Scheme Update)
- Item 8 (Crime and Disorder Scrutiny – Update on the Implementation of the Safer Communities Strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15)

**8. STOP THE ONE BARNET PROGRAMME PETITION - EXECUTIVE RESPONSE**

On 24 October 2012, the Committee considered a petition which had received 2,973 signatures which called for the One Barnet programme to be stopped and for a referendum to be held on this issue. In accordance with the provisions of the Council's Constitution, the Committee called an officer to give account with regards to the issues raised in the petition. At the meeting, Committee Members made a number of comments and requested that the officer called to give account refer these to the responsible Cabinet Member. In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee, the representation was referred to the Cabinet Member who attended the meeting to respond to the issues identified.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships, Councillor Rams, addressed the Committee. He advised the Committee that as part of the One Barnet programme each service that had been reviewed and considered on a case by case basis. A variety of approaches were being taken to service transformation including shared services, local authority trading companies, in-house options and outsourcing.

Responding to concerns regarding public consultation on the One Barnet Programme, Councillor Rams informed the Committee that the administration had been elected on a manifesto pledge of a 0% council tax increase. He advised the Committee that this would be achieved through savings arising from the One Barnet programme. He added public consultation had taken place on the Council Budget which included details of savings that were expected to be achieved from various projects within the Programme.

In relation to the use of a public sector comparator, Councillor Rams advised the Committee that each service had been reviewed methodically with all options considered and assessed.

Responding to concerns regarding the 10 year contract duration, Councillor Rams reported that checks and balances would be in place for monitoring and a change

protocol would be in place to deal with legal, financial and policy changes. He added that a new management structure would be in place to support delivery of the new organisational structure. The Assistant Director Commercial Services advised the Committee that it would be possible to promote performance indicators to key performance indicators (which are associated with financial penalties if not delivered) during the contract lifetime to deal with any new requirements arising from legal, financial and policy changes.

The Chairman highlighted recent issues with contracting and procurement and sought assurance that contracts had been properly drafted. The Assistant Director Commercial Services advised the Committee that the Council had been utilising the services of external legal (Trowers and Hamblins) and commercial experts (iMPOWER) to draft service specifications, undertake the competitive dialogue process and negotiate contract terms. He added that the new senior management structure would ensure that there was sufficient contracting / commissioning expertise in the management team.

The Committee noted that the contract would include exit clauses.

A Member commented that the One Barnet Programme represented a significant departure from the original policy outlined in the Future Shape agenda in 2008 which envisaged a 'one public sector' approach.

Responding to concerns regarding the role of overview and scrutiny committees in the new organisational structure, Officers reported that senior officers (commissioners) and delivery units (service providers) would still be required to come and give account whenever requested and that this had been written into contracts.

In relation to the Development and Regulatory Services (DRS) project, a Member highlighted that when the Business Case was presented to Cabinet Resources Committee in December 2011, a strategic partnership was preferred over a joint venture. It was noted that recent information had identified a joint venture as the preferred option. The Assistant Director Commercial Services advised the Committee that the competitive dialogue process had been used to explore different options and that these had evolved over time. During the second stage of the dialogue process, it had become evident that a joint venture would present a better option for the Council than a strategic partnership. Councillor Rams added that Cabinet Members had been briefed throughout the dialogue process.

Responding to a suggestion that the Council could utilise reserves to fund the required investment in infrastructure, Officers reported that bidders for the DRS services cluster would invest in IS and there were expected economies of scale from developing commercial expertise which may lead to opportunities for external trade.

A Member questioned how commissioners would monitor the performance of delivery units in terms of delivering specified outcomes. Officers advised the Committee that key performance indicators would measure both quantitative outputs and also outcomes, adding that overview and scrutiny committees and the Audit Committee would be able to monitor performance on an ongoing basis.

Responding to a question, the Legal Officer advised the Committee that the Council were under no obligation to enter into a contract with the bidder. It was noted that this would be a decision reserved for the Cabinet.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- 1. The Committee note the response of the Cabinet Member to the Stop The One Barnet Programme petition, as outlined above.**
- 2. The Committee request that the Cabinet consider the comments, recommendations and representation made by the Committee in relation to the Stop The One Barnet Programme petition and that these be referred to the Cabinet for consideration and response.**
- 3. Officers be requested to provide additional information to the Committee on learning from other council's including details of locations, dates, duration and how learning was applied to the projects in the One Barnet programme.**
- 4. Officers be requested to provide a breakdown of the cost of external legal advice for the One Barnet programme.**

**9. REVERSE PARKING CHARGES PETITION - UPDATE**

On 29 February 2012 the Committee considered a petition signed by 3,088 residents which requested a reverse of recent parking charges increases in the borough. Following consideration of the petition, the Committee had made recommendations to the responsible officers and requested an update in September 2012. In accordance with the recommendations made in February, the report provided the Committee with an update on actions being taken in North Finchley.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Dean Cohen, supported by the Assistant Director Transport and Highways and Highways Manager Traffic and Development, provided an update to the Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Environment informed the Committee that following a parking review in North Finchley a number of changes had been made to parking charges and the physical infrastructure to better serve the retail centre. Officers reported that a consultation had taken place with traders in North Finchley and that changes that had been introduced had been led by them. The Cabinet Member advised the Committee that reviews were also being undertaken in High Barnet, Edgware, Hendon, Golders Green, Finchley and Mill Hill. Consultation exercises had been undertaken and were being analysed. The findings would inform solutions for those retail centres.

Responding to a question regarding the cost of implementing a 'Free After 3' scheme in the boroughs town centres, Officers advised that this would cost in the region of £500,000 for the 4 week period in the lead up to Christmas. The Cabinet Member for Environment advised the Committee that he would be introducing free parking in town centres on the weekend of 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> December that a formal announcement would be made shortly.

The Committee questioned whether there would be a reintroduction of cash/debit card parking meters to complement pay by phone parking. The Cabinet Member reported that card meters would be introduced in some car parks and trailed in town centre locations. He added that there would be an increased number of shops which supplied scratch cards.

Responding to a question, Officers clarified that the number of successful appeals against penalty charge notices was below the pre-Parking Service outsourcing level. However, it was noted that there were issues with the back office service being provided by NSL which were currently being addressed.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- 1. Officers be requested to provide an update on the progress of Town Centre Strategies.**
- 2. The Cabinet Member for Environment be requested to ensure that Ward Members are involved in town centre parking reviews.**
- 3. The Cabinet Member for Environment be requested to give consideration to reviewing residential parking arrangements and charges following the town centre parking reviews.**

**10. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME UPDATE**

This Committee received a report which provided an update on the implementation of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme. The report was presented by the Head of Housing Strategy and Performance, Paul Shipway, and the Head of Housing Options at Barnet Homes, Kate Laffan.

The Committee noted that the Housing Allocations Scheme had been amended in April 2012 following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 and that further changes are due to enable the Council to discharge its homeless duties in the private rented sector.

Members expressed concern regarding the potential for subjectivity in the Scheme. It was requested that further guidance be developed for officers implementing the scheme and that details of the appeals mechanism be made available. Officers reported that there had been recent improvements to the guidance and supporting IT system. Members were advised that officers used casework and complaints to refine the system and address issues.

A Member commented that the Choice Based Lettings system was easier for the public to understand and was operated successfully in many other local authorities.

The Committee noted that there had been no legal challenges to allocations made under the scheme to date.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. The Committee note the content of the Housing Allocations Scheme Update**
- 2. The Committee be provided with details of accommodation provided for banded households not housed in social housing, including how many of these placements were outside of the borough.**
- 3. The Committee receive an update on the impact of the welfare reform changes at the next meeting.**

## **11. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY - UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2011/12 - 2014/15**

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the progress made by the Safer Communities Partnership Board in implementing the Safer Communities Strategy 2011/12 to 2014/15.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Resident Engagement, Councillor Longstaff, Detective Chief Inspector Helen Williams and the Strategic Policy Advisor, Andrew Nathan, presented the report and responded to questions from the Committee.

The Committee questioned whether there was an overemphasis on young people in the Strategy. The Strategic Policy Advisor reported that indicators relating to perceived anti-social behaviour by young people were part of a suite of national indicators, adding that detail around these targets were contained within the action plan linked to the Safer Communities Strategy.

A Member questioned the extent to which the Council's partners were involved in the Early Intervention approach, particularly with regard to budget alignment and interagency cooperation. Officers reported that the Council had committed to the Early Intervention approach through involvement in the Troubled Families programme. The Committee were informed that the following multi-agency partnership initiatives were ongoing:

- Development of an Integrated Offender Management System;
- Establishment of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; and
- Ongoing Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the proposed changes to Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) and the proposed reduction in the number of police stations in the borough. DCI Williams advised Members that decisions regarding the future of SNTs and police stations would be taken at chief officer level. She added that the long-term vision was to significantly increase SNTs.

Members highlighted that there had been a 3% increase in burglary, despite the focus within the Safer Communities Strategy on property crime (with a specific focus on burglary). DCI Williams informed the Committee that over a 10 year period burglary had decreased. She added that Operation Hurricane which had been conducted recently had resulted in a 20-25% decrease in the number of burglaries. The Committee noted that the Metropolitan Police Barnet had recently had a bid for funding to run a similar operation approved. Members were informed that through migration of burglary offenders was an issue for Barnet.

Responding to a question, the Cabinet Member for Safety and Resident Engagement advised the Committee that the council and police were considering introducing ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition).

### **RESOLVED that:-**

- 1. The Safer Communities Partnership Board be requested to note the concern of the Committee regarding the commitment of partners to the multi-agency approach at a time of budget reductions across the public sector.**

2. **The Committee welcome and support the ongoing work of the Safer Communities Partnership Board members on Integrated Offender Management.**
3. **The Committee request that all Members are updated by the police on proposals regarding the reconfiguration of Safer Neighbourhoods Teams.**

## **12. ADVANCED NOTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Committee noted the Advanced Notification of Executive Decisions (published on 14 November 2012) which had been tabled at the meeting.

**RESOLVED that:-**

1. **That the Committee note the Advance Notice of Executive Decisions.**
2. **The Committee request to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of the following Cabinet reports at the special meeting on 13 December 2012:**
  - **Welfare Reform – Localisation of Council Tax Support; and**
  - **Welfare Reform – Localisation of the Hardship Fund**

## **13. BUSINESS MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED that:**

1. **the Committee note the Forward Work Programme**
2. **the items listed in the minute item 12 above be added to the Forward Work Programme.**

## **14. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

The Chairman moved an urgent late item of business. At the request of the Chairman, Officers tabled a Feasibility Study which proposed the establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider the development of an Education Strategy in Barnet.

The Assistant Director Policy, Performance and Planning outlined the context of the proposed review. Following consideration of the Feasibility Study and the oral representation from the Assistant Director the Committee

**RESOVLED that a politically proportioned Overview and Scrutiny Panel be convened to consider an Education Strategy for Barnet.**

**RESOVLED that the decision to proceed with a Task and Finish Group Review of Children's Centres be reaffirmed.**

The meeting finished at 9.59 pm