

Decisions of the Policy and Resources Committee

24 September 2020

Members Present:-

Councillor Daniel Thomas (Chairman)
Councillor David Longstaff (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Dean Cohen
Councillor Geof Cooke
Councillor Val Duschinsky
Councillor Anthony Finn
Councillor Ross Houston
Councillor Arjun Mittra

Councillor Alison Moore
Councillor Sachin Rajput
Councillor Barry Rawlings
Councillor Gabriel Rozenberg
Councillor Peter Zinkin

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS (IF ANY)

None.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Geof Cooke introduced the Member's Item.

Members Item Request:	Instruction from Committee
Making passive provision for West London Orbital (WLO) platforms at the Brent Cross West Thameslink station that the Council is delivering would save public money when the	That an update on this item is included as part of the 'Brent Cross Cricklewood update report' considered by the Housing and Growth Committee.

<p>WLO is approved and would accord with Barnet Council and Mayor of London policy.</p> <p>Unfortunately, National Government support to TfL during the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented TfL from committing the £1.4m estimated cost of the work and there is now a serious risk that the provision might not be made in the station design at Network Rail's GRIP 5 stage that must be progressed to enable the Thameslink station to be opened on schedule in 2022.</p> <p>I propose that officers and the Leader investigate every possible funding mechanism and lobby budget holders including the Secretary of State for Transport to ensure that passive provision for the WLO is made at Brent Cross West.</p>	
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At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Ross Houston introduced the Member's Item.

Members Item Request:	Instruction from Committee
<p>The Government have published a document 'Planning for the Future' that will effectively result in a bonfire of current planning regulation, and even more overdevelopment in Barnet with little likelihood that the Borough will benefit from additional affordable housing and funding for infrastructure.</p> <p>The proposals will scrap the need to obtain planning permission once early stage principles for a development are agreed in 'growth areas', and developments will only need basic checks in 'renewal areas'.</p> <p>This will side-line local planning committees, local democratic accountability, and the ability of residents to have a say on final planning applications.</p> <p>In order to protect Barnet from overdevelopment and ensure we are</p>	<p>No further action (see comments below)</p>

in control of planning policy, and housing and regeneration locally, I believe the Council must oppose the 'Planning for the Future' proposals, and I ask the Committee to discuss and agree a robust response to the Government's consultation.	
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Comments and further actions agreed:

Councillor Cooke's Members Item

The Chairman agreed to lobby the various organisations involved and report back to the Committee on any outcomes achieved.

Councillor Houston's Members Item

Councillor Houston, duly seconded by Councillor Mitra moved the motion formally requesting:

'The council oppose the 'Planning for the Future' proposals, and for the Committee to discuss and agree a robust response to the Government's consultation.'

He further requested if consultation with local groups such as the Barnet Society, Finchley Society and established Resident Associations could be undertaken.

The Chairman commented that all groups or organisation were welcome to submit their views and that those views would be taken into account. But he advised that a formal consultation on a local level across the borough would not be undertaken.

The Chairman did agree to promote the link to the Government's white paper consultation as it affected local planning.

Upon being put to the vote the motion in name of Councillor Houston was declared lost.

RESOLVED that the instructions as set out in the table above are noted.

7. ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PHASE

The Committee considered the report which provided a detailed overview of the Council's response to the COVID-19 emergency and the help and support it provided to residents, partners, local businesses and staff. It further detailed all the elements of response so far, lessons learnt and the approach for the next phase of the pandemic.

The Chairman and Leader of the Council, on behalf of all Councillors thanked the Director of Public Health and her team on all the work, effort and time they'd put into responding to the pandemic. He further extended thanks to all those involved as part of the emergency response, this included not only officers but the voluntary sector, NHS responders, Faith Groups, individual volunteers, charities and many other organisations.

The Chief Executive spoke of the huge challenges faced nationally and locally for Barnet and wished also to place on record a thank you to everyone involved in particular the Director of Public Health and her team.

With regards to the detailed recovery plan, the Committee were advised individual Theme Committees would receive updates on the recovery activity in their areas of responsibility.

The Director of Public Health thanked the Public Health team, council officers, council services and organisations that mobilised together to respond to the pandemic. She took the Committee through the slides in Appendix A, highlighting key areas and provided a summary of some of the lessons learnt both culturally and technically. Further highlighted were some aspects of the next phase such as recovering the economy as this had wider public health implications and keeping schools open by providing them with as much support as possible.

She explained that going forward the focus was on how to ensure the response was in a proportionate way as resources were finite. Barnet is one of the largest London boroughs, with a significantly large number of businesses and one of the largest numbers of schools.

With regards to testing, there had been an increase in the number of days the mobile testing units visited Barnet, with a fixed testing unit due to be set up in Burnt Oak.

With regards to campaigns the Director explained there had been a number of targeted health campaigns to reach Barnet's diverse population and in particular specific groups and communities. The contact tracing activity had been positive achieving 83%-85%.

With regards to bringing services back into Business As Usual (BAU) the Chief Executive explained the vast majority of services were back to BAU albeit some being delivered in a slightly different way.

With regards to children and young people who had to self-isolate or were in a bubble which meant they had to isolate as a whole, the Executive Director for Children and Young People explained that the council in conjunction with a government scheme had access to over 700 laptops, with further laptops being purchased. These had been distributed to schools and those children who were deemed vulnerable. As the government had extended the scheme, the council would continue to work to secure more laptops. He explained that work had also been undertaken with 2 OFSTED inspectors who were seconded to the 6 London Boroughs in north London and were looking at 'Loss Learning' and a guide on how to improve learning during lockdown.

With regards to Care Homes the Executive Director for Adults and Public Health explained that they implemented early on a policy of no admission until people had gone at least 8 days plus of showing symptoms, this was in accordance with the guidance at the time. Throughout the first phase, 5 councils Adult Social Care services worked collectively with all the additional capacity stood up to deal with the pandemic, around the support for care homes and also working with Community Health. She explained they were the first sub-region in London to implement a formal policy through the Integrated Care System (ICS) of governance, agreeing that there would be no discharges of COVID positive patients to care homes across the 5 Boroughs. This had subsequently been picked up by the London wide Care Home Oversight Group as an example of good practice and was well supported by medical and health teams across North Central London. She advised that the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be

considering a report on this at their next meeting. She also informed the Committee that the shopping service and call centre were still in operation for vulnerable residents, but that the call service was on much more skeletal service in terms of the call centre and welfare care services. In the event of a second these services could be scaled up quite quickly.

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations as set out in the report were unanimously carried.

RESOLVED – That the Committee

- 1. Note the report and identify areas of improvement and feedback that can be incorporated into the next phase of the response.**
- 2. Agree the proposed approach to next phase of the response and acknowledge that, due to nature of this pandemic, certain elements of next phase maybe subject to change.**

8. BUSINESS PLANNING 2021 TO 2025 AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2020/21

The Committee considered the report which set out the MTFS that had been refreshed as part of the annual budget setting process and took into account assumptions relating to Covid-19. The Committee were informed that as part of this process the council would also review its in-year and ongoing financial pressures to calculate the likely gap that would need to be addressed across the financial years 2021 to 2025. Further consideration was given to the process that would take place for 2021/22 and future years in order to achieve a balanced budget.

Committee approval was also sought for a series of budget management decisions for 2020/21 required as part of normal business in line with the organisation’s Financial Regulations.

The Chairman explained there was £15m gap of unfunded COVID costs which were a budget pressure and in some areas, such as parking a revenue pressure due loss of income. He further explained that clarity was needed from the government on specific funding streams such as the New Homes Bonus, Social Care and Public Health Grant and Social Care Precept.

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations as set out in the report were declared carried. The vote was recorded as follows;

For	7
Against	5
Abstentions	1

RESOLVED – That the Committee

- 1. Note the financial strategy of the organisation agreed by Full Council, as set out in paragraph1.3.1;**
- 2. Notes the level of uncertainty in Local Government funding, service demand and income as set out in section 1.1;**

3. Notes the current MTFS attached as Appendix A and key components summarised in paragraph 1.3.7. The MTFS sets out the likely budget changes over the period 2021/22 to 2024/25, including assumptions around inflation, changes to levies, pressures, savings and grant funding. It is the model around which the Council's financial strategy is based;
4. Approves the proposed allocation of savings targets to Theme Committees for 2021/22 as set out in paragraph 1.3.32 and require officers to finalise proposals to meet these targets;
5. Delegate to Theme Committees the identification and consideration of additional savings required for 2020/21 paragraph 1.3.30 and in paragraph 1.3.36 for 2021/22;
6. Approve and note as required the virements and commitments from the Contingency budget in paragraph 1.4.4 to 1.4.12
7. Approve and note as required the virements between services set out in paragraphs 1.4.11 to 1.4.13;
8. Approve the proposed debt write-offs in paragraph 1.4.14 related to Housing Benefit Overpayments;
9. Notes the current forecast balances of reserves as set out in section 1.5;
10. Approve the amended capital programme (including additions) as set out in paragraph 1.6.2;
11. Approve the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to slippage as set out in Appendix B and paragraph 1.6.5;
12. Approve the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to additions in paragraphs 1.6.6 to 1.6.22 and deletions and virements as set out in paragraph 1.6.23 in accordance with the virement rules; and
13. Note the Q1 20/21 Corporate Risk Register in Appendix C.

9. BARNET EQUALITY ALLIES

The Co-chairs of the Barnet Equality Allies (BEA), Sameen Zafar and Robert Maynard delivered a presentation to the Committee.

They provided the Committee with some background on who the Barnet Equality Allies are and what they do. The vision for the group is to bridge the gap between the staff, the community and corporate functions and champion Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives.

They highlighted some of the group's purpose and functions which include;

- leading on special/interest working groups that tackle specific issues and create support solutions around EDI

- being a voice for staff as a collective group and to create staff networks that can go out and liaise with different teams in the organisation and the community to promote the EDI objectives
- positively promoting EDI through awareness and training
- building organisational partnerships to strengthen equality

They pointed out that one of the more critical roles the group have and has been crucial this year is that of the 'critical friend'. This role provides the BEA with a unique opportunity to review and critique organisational policies.

They further highlight some of the groups key achievements which included;

- being the forefront of championing EDI in Barnet by consistently promoting and celebrating diversity events (Holocaust Memorial Day, Rainbow week, Women's day, Mental Health week, Black Lives Matter listening workshop and more)
- being an integral between the council leadership and staff, and through active participation at CMT level discussions being able to raise and escalate issues and challenges that staff face around EDI
- actively collaborating with senior and corporate management to enable embedding of EDI considerations in all council business
- the launching of new staff networks to lead on specific areas of interest. So far we have launched LGBTQ+ Staff Network, Women Staff Network, Black Staff Resource and Action Group, and work is in progress to launch Anti-Racism Network, Disabilities and Community Action Network
- being a platform for professional development exposure and networking opportunities. Staff from different levels of the organisation come together to work on different actions that showcase their skills and help their professional development

They detailed for the committee some of events that had taken place this year such as Black Live Matter, LGBTQ & Staff Network and Women Staff Network.

The Director of Resources informed the Committee that the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee considered the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan at their last meeting. As part of the plan was a theme on 'how we work' which included a number of HR actions and was currently out for consultation.

Inconclusion Sameen and Robert expressed their hope that going forward the Barnet Equality Allies could have a link into Policy and Resources Committee to enable them to promote their activities and events at Committee and Member level.

RESOLVED – that the Committee

- **note the work undertaken by the Barnet Equalities Allies and their continued work in championing and promoting the Equality Diversity and Inclusion objectives.**

10. THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS SERVICE

The Committee considered the report which sought approval of the Shareholder Agreement in relation to Barnet Education and Learning Service, attached at Appendix D. Further approval was sought for the annual Barnet Education and Learning Service Business Plan, attached at Appendix E.

Councillor Cooke expressed some concern with regards to the option selected in that it would lead to an inferior pension arrangement for some employees who were not part of the LGPS, creating a 2 tier work force with staff doing a similar job being on different terms and conditions . He further felt there would be issues around continuity of service.

The Executive Director for Children and Young people clarified that members of staff could not opt into the LGPS if they become an employee. They would be employed on the terms and conditions that had been advertised for which the work based pension had been put in place.

The Labour Group confirmed their agreement to noting recommendations 1-4 but would not support recommendation 5 and 6

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations as set out in the report were declared carried by a majority vote

RESOLVED – that the Committee

- 1. That the Policy and Resources Committee note the content of the report.**
- 2. That the Policy and Resources Committee note the decision to terminate the current contract with Mott MacDonald.**
- 3. That the Policy and Resources Committee note the decision to novate the current contract with Mott MacDonald to the newly created Barnet Education and Learning Service Ltd and for the option to extend the contract to 31st March 2026 to be exercised.**
- 4. That the Policy and Resources Committee note the decision to novate the current contract which Mott MacDonald holds with ISS to provide catering services to the council and to commission Barnet Education and Learning Service Ltd to manage the contract on behalf of the council.**
- 5. That the Policy and Resources Committee approve the Shareholder Agreement in relation to Barnet Education and Learning Service, set out at appendix D.**
- 6. That the Policy and Resources Committee approve the annual Barnet Education and Learning Service Business Plan, set out at Appendix E.**

11. BARNET'S STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - COVID 19 ADDENDUM

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council will involve local residents, businesses and community groups in the preparation of planning documents and the consideration of planning applications. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and in preparation for public consultation on the next draft version of the Local Plan (Regulation 19) the Council is clarifying, through this Addendum how it will engage with the community and continue to ensure that planning processes in Barnet remain fair, transparent and inclusive.

Following the consideration of the paper, the Committee

RESOLVED –

That the P&R Committee:

- **Agrees the Addendum to Barnet’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2018 (Appendix A)**
- **Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to make any necessary changes to the document in consultation with the Leader before the final version is published.**
- **Delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to withdraw the Addendum at an appropriate date**

12. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

13. ANY ITEM(S) THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

14. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

15. THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS SERVICE - APPENDIX C: EXIT AGREEMENT FOR TERMINATION OF CONTRACT WITH MOTT MACDONALD EXEMPT

RESOLVED - that the information contained in the exempt report be noted.

16. ANY OTHER EXEMPT ITEM(S) THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 9.34 pm