

Decisions of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee

18 November 2020

Members Present:-

Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman)
Councillor Roberto Weeden-Sanz (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Jennifer Grocock	Councillor Sara Conway
Councillor Helene Richman	Councillor Charlie O-Macauley
Councillor Nizza Fluss	Councillor Danny Rich
Councillor Lachhya Gurung	Councillor Zakia Zubairi

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September were approved as an accurate record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (IF ANY)

None.

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

Cllr Rich declared an interest under item 8 – he is a Youth Magistrate in another Borough.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. RE-PROVISION OF HENDON LIBRARY AND LOCAL STUDIES CENTRE, RELOCATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES RESOURCE SERVICE

The Chairman introduced the item, noting that this is a great opportunity for Barnet further to the building of new libraries in other areas of the Borough, bringing new technology and being part of a wider regeneration of the Hendon area.

Cllr Conway made the following queries and comments:

- Cllr Conway requested callover ahead of future CLLC meetings so that the Labour Group can be fully briefed. This was agreed.

Action: Governance Officer

- Hendon Library is of historic importance locally and nationally. Cllr Conway felt that the consultation process seemed relatively quick and requested more details about it.

Ms Richens, Head of Library Services reported that the consultation would be phased over a long period of time, beginning in spring 2021. This would be subject to Policy & Resources Committee's agreement of the proposals in December. There would be detailed discussions with residents on what they want from the new site and a range of engagement activities.

- How would the new library's floor space compare to the current library, including prior to Middlesex University leasing part of the latter?

Ms Richens responded that proposed footprint is around 800sq metres; around 150 metres larger than the current site, with a more efficient use of space than the present building. Ms Richens would respond after the meeting on the size of the library before the lease to Middlesex University.

Action: Ms Richens

- How would archive material be stored? This is a valuable resource. For example, the stained-glass windows of the old Church End Library had been damaged and lost in the process of the new one being built.

Ms Richens noted that Barnet's archivist, Mr Petrie would be closely involved in this so that items would be stored appropriately.

- How much was being spent on the recent refurbishment of Hendon Town Hall?

This information was not available at the meeting and this is not covered in the report, which related to the libraries only.

- As Middlesex University is looking to modernise library sites, Burnt Oak Library frontage and site needs refurbishment more urgently than Hendon Library. There appears to be a divorce between libraries in most people's understanding, and the estates that a council manages.

Ms Richens responded that she had discussed the infrastructure development plan with the Growth Team and this had included a discussion about Burnt Oak Library.

- Cllr Rich asked about the current car park, used by Members and officers, where the new library would be situated.

Ms Richens noted that it was unclear whether anyone other than Members and officers used the car park. The Chairman noted that it is not heavily used and that he felt confident that officers would look into this.

- Cllr Fluss commented that as Hendon Ward Councillor she could not see the reason to leave the Grade II Listed Hendon Library or why it would benefit Barnet residents.

She asked whether Middlesex University would pay for the Library at Egerton Road and what the cost would be. Would there be anything else on the site? Where will the car park be? The report states that the Egerton Road site is too small for the School Libraries Resource Centre and that this will have to be relocated. How much would this relocation cost and what would be the true cost of the new library including this? How much would the rent be?

Cllr Fluss noted that she had seen the figure of £30,000 for relocation and asked why the Council would pay this, when it has an adequate library already? How can the Council be assured that Middlesex University will be able to fund this?

The Chairman noted that the recommendations in the report were for the Committee to comment, and that approval would be sought at Policy & Resources Committee. Such representations could be requested of Policy & Resources Committee. He added that CLLC is considering the library and not the wider development.

Ms Richens confirmed that issues around the Hendon Hub would be discussed at Policy & Resources Committee, so she did not have the detailed information requested on funding. She had been informed that the Members' car parking would be re-provided. Parking and traffic would be part of the broader consideration of the scheme.

Ms Richens noted that she understood the architectural significance and importance of the current building, though it is not deemed to be necessarily a good location for a modern library service. The new library would have more space and be able to provide a wider range of services. The current building is difficult, expensive to manage and not energy efficient.

- Cllr O-Macauley asked how much input would be invited from the community during the consultation period about Burnt Oak Library. Ms Richens responded that the scheme was not at this point but for Hendon Library there would be multiple approaches including surveys, displays, drop-in sessions and co-creation sessions.

That Committee RESOLVED to note the proposal to re-provide Hendon library as part of the new Hendon Hub development and to relocate the School Libraries Resources Service (SLRS).

8. BUSINESS PLANNING 2020-2025

The Chairman introduced the report (supplement version with amendments). He reported that further to publication he had been informed of a typo: the third paragraph of the 'summary' section states that there is a shortfall in savings for 2021-22 of £5.618million, whereas it is clear from the table below that this should have stated £3.890million.

- Cllr Fluss referred to page 25 of the report - increase promotion and invest in Hendon Town Hall (HTH) - does Middlesex University, since it leases HTH, pay for all works there as part of their lease?

Mr May, Head of Customer and Digital Services, responded that full detailed proposals would be worked up in 2021 to enable implementation in the financial year 22/23. Initially the proposal is to increase income and to achieve this would require improvements to HTH. The responsibilities of Middlesex University and the details of any refurbishment would be agreed in 2021.

- Cllr Fluss requested to see the terms of the lease so that if Middlesex University is required to carry out full repairs this can be addressed. Mr May agreed to provide this to Cllr Fluss outside the meeting.

Action: Mr May

- Cllr Rich stated that the Law Commission had proposed to liberalise marriage ceremonies which may mean fewer would take place at HTH, resulting in reduced income.

Mr May agreed, adding that this makes it even more important for HTH to be competitive. There would be a consultation in 2021 on the proposals and plans were being made for this potential opportunity.

- Cllr Rich asked about Section 2.30 in the report. He declared an interest by virtue of the fact that he is a Youth Magistrate in another Borough. The report notes an 18% increase in robbery in Barnet over the past year which involved mainly young people stealing from young people.

Mr Khan, Head of Counter Fraud Operations, noted that the Council is in regular contact with the police on such issues and that this problem also affects Brent and Harrow at similar levels. Mr Leng, Community Safety Officer, reported that a small number of minors had been involved and had been responsible for a significant spike in crime. Occasionally individuals from outside the Borough create stark increases in crime. Cllr Rich noted that he would be keen to discuss this further with Mr Leng outside the meeting.

Action: Mr Leng

- Cllr Conway asked how the Registration Service had overachieved in its income targets by £200,000 in 2019-20.

Mr May responded that this had happened following a review of the service when it was contracted in to Barnet.

- Cllr Conway noted that it would be helpful to see comparative costs from other Boroughs in relation to the School Libraries Resource Services.

Ms Richens would follow up after the meeting.

Action: Ms Richens

- Cllr Conway stated that a lot of people were volunteering especially during the pandemic so she would welcome a volunteer accreditation scheme as part of business planning.

- Cllr Conway expressed her concern that the report did not mention youth violence and only had a small section on domestic abuse and violence. A lot of work had been undertaken by the voluntary and faith sectors on domestic violence recently, including training sessions.

The Director of Assurance noted that both domestic violence and youth violence had been reported to the Safer Communities Partnership Board, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, on 23rd October.

The Council had responded to the increase in reports of domestic violence during the pandemic, by increasing the frequency of meetings with partners. A piece of work to review the governance of community safety, and coordination of their work programmes, was underway and she would report back.

Action: Ms Green

- Cllr Conway noted that there are delays with repairs to lighting in some parts of the Borough, particularly Grahame Park, during the regeneration work. Residents had reported feeling unsafe in some areas due to this.

The Director of Assurance noted that there is a cross-council project considering issues at Grahame Park and a report had been presented to the Housing and Growth Committee. She offered to feed back on the lighting issue and ensure this is picked up and that Cllr Conway is updated.

Action: Ms Green

- Cllr Conway felt that the Committee should consider loneliness and isolation in the Borough. It could also be one factor leading to radicalisation of views.
- Cllr Conway reported that food supply had not been mentioned during the second wave of the pandemic. She had experienced a shortage of supplies at Burnt Oak food bank despite generous donations by the voluntary and faith sector. There was concern about the upcoming Christmas holiday.

Mr Cooper, Deputy Head of Strategy – Strategy and Engagement responded that plans were underway for food supplies during the Christmas school holiday, as well as for a grant scheme that Family Services would be leading on. The Central Supplies Hub would be transferred to Barnet Together to manage.

Cllr Conway noted that it is important to organise this close to schools in the Borough for ease of access. Half term had created a lot of panic and placed demands on teachers and the voluntary sector. The Chairman thanked Cllr Conway for raising this issue which the Council is preparing for.

- Cllr Fluss expressed her thanks to the Rt Hon Robert Buckland MP and the Rt Hon Priti Patel MP for their work on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) resulting in £80 million funding being provided to tackle this issue.
- Cllr Fluss requested details of the 19 partnership organisations who are working with the Council to tackle hate crime.

Due to technical issues at the virtual meeting some officers were unable to respond. The Chairman requested that officers highly publicise the referral partnership organisations, particularly in light of the upcoming holiday period and the pandemic.

Action: Mr Leng

The Chairman moved to the vote on the officer's recommendations. The vote was recorded as follows:

For – 6
Against – 0
Abstained - 4

The Committee RESOLVED:

- 1. To consider the MTFS proposals that relate to the committee as set out in Appendix A and refer their comments to Policy and Resources Committee for eventual decision by Council.**
- 2. To consider the MTFS proposals that relate to the committee as set out in Appendix A and refer their comments to Policy and Resources Committee for eventual decision by Council.**
- 3. To note the updates on the Recovery Planning Programme provided.**
- 4. To approve the continuing work on the Recovery Planning Programme for the service areas it is responsible for, including any next steps outlined in this report.**

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Forward Plan.

Cllr Conway requested a more proactive and strategic approach to focusing on delivery and prioritisation of issues, and a mechanism for improved engagement and scrutiny. She noted that the Mayor of London has implemented an action plan to look at the Metropolitan police and BAME communities in particular which has parallels with issues raised at the meeting about the dialogue between the police and communities and how this is managed by the Council and others. Cllr Conway suggested that she discuss this with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of CLLC and that papers from SCPB be shared with CLLC.

Cllr Conway added that the Safer Neighbourhoods Board provides a community voice around crime and including it at CLLC would provide added scrutiny. There may be other issues Members are aware of that don't get reported to CLLC, so scrutiny is missed. The Borough Command Unit reports appeared to have been left off the agenda, as well as domestic violence. Also given the conversations about cladding and fire safety it would be helpful to discuss this at CLLC.

The Chairman responded that issues can straddle two committees and the risk is that they will be reported to Policy & Resources Committee as a result. Many of the topics discussed at CLLC are part of periodic reviews, and the schedule allows officers time to put together meaningful information that Members can interrogate. He noted that he would be happy to discuss this further with Cllr Conway outside the meeting.

Action: Chairman, Cllr Conway

Cllr Weeden-Sanz noted that there is a risk of duplicating work for officers if the correct mechanisms for highlighting issues are not used. Callover would be offered as agreed earlier in the meeting, and maybe training should be improved if required to fully support Members to raise issues that have not been highlighted elsewhere, through the appropriate channels.

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

Cllr Conway expressed her thanks to the Young Barnet Foundation for their Christmas Gifts Appeal, and to all organisations involved in the Bringing Smiles to Your Door Campaign. She also thanked the voluntary sector for their recent meeting on equality and diversity at OneStonegrove which will make a huge contribution on wellbeing and safety in the Borough.

The meeting finished at 8.36 pm