



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 22 November 2022.

Councillors present:

Gina Blomefield
Claire Bloomer

Gary Selwyn - Chair
Patrick Coleman
Richard Norris

Nikki Ind
David Cunningham

Officers present:

Rob Weaver – Chief Executive
David Stanley – Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Claire Locke – Assistant Director for Property and Regeneration
Christopher Crookall-Fallon – Head of Climate Action
Caleb Harris – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ana Prelici – Democratic Services Officer

Observers:

Councillors Joe Harris and Mike Every

OS.210 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Andrews, Roly Hughes and Nigel Robbins

OS.211 Substitute Members

Councillor Tony Berry was substitute for Councillor Stephen Andrews

OS.212 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members

Chris Crookall-Fallon Head of Climate Action declared an interest as a member of non-remunerated role as Chair of the Board of Directors. Bath and West Community Energy, a not for profit organisation.

OS.213 Minutes

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 4 October 2022 were considered and the Committee agreed that they were an accurate record of the meeting

Voting Record – For 7, Against 0, Abstentions 1, Absent 2,

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Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 18 October 2022 were considered and the Committee agreed that they were an accurate record of the meeting

Voting Record – For 7, Against 0, Abstentions 1, Absent 2,

OS.214 Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair.

OS.215 Public Questions

There were no questions from the Public.

OS.216 Member Questions

There were no questions from Members.

OS.217 Bromford Housing presentation

The purpose of this agenda item was to receive a presentation from Bromford Housing.

The Homeseeker Plus Lead officer presented an overview of the HomeseekerPlus choice based system and the Local Connections criteria was explained along with the Allocations Policy and Verification Procedures.

The Committee noted that the HomeseekerPlus choice based lettings system had been commissioned in 2016 and consultation of the Common Allocations policy had taken place in 2019 and reviewed in 2021.

The Committee noted that the Local Connections criteria was applied to Affordable Homes allocation and considered the history of residence, and family and employment connections including membership of the Armed Forces. There were also 'special circumstances' including those fleeing domestic abuse, victim of modern slavery and other reasons prioritising residency in the area (e.g. Ukrainian migrants).

The Committee noted that Affordable Rent properties were available at 80% of the market rate and Social Rent properties were available at 60% of the market rate, although it was recognised that the 'market rate' was particularly high across the Cotswolds

The Associate Director Localities at Bromford provided an overview of Bromford Housing Association that owned around 5,000 (approx. 80%) of housing association rented properties across the district.

The Committee noted new properties were usually added through S106 agreements or those built by Bromford themselves and 70 new (Shared Ownership/Affordable Rent or Social Rent) properties had become available during 2021/2022.

The Committee noted that in the past two years Bromford Housing had created more Social Rented homes than any other Housing Association across the country.

The Committee noted 229 properties were offered for let in the Cotswold District in the previous financial year with vacated properties typically being 'turned around' within 38 days.

The Committee tenants were required to adhere to conditions within a lease or tenancy agreement particularly regarding not engaging in anti-social behaviour.

The Committee noted that the removal of a tenant from a property ultimately required a Court judgement decision, and this usually required a significant file of evidence that may have taken a long time to compile.

The Committee noted that Covenants place on properties (such as) 'tenants should be local and in full time work' were adhered to by Bromford, however where CDC choose not to enforce outdated Covenants, e.g. 'working from home is not allowed', Bromford respect these decisions.

The Committee noted that around 40 homes were currently empty (in addition to properties scheduled for demolition and redevelopment).

The Committee noted that Bromford Housing had a 'damp and mould task-force' that could act quickly to complete surveys and identify where remedial action was required.

The Committee noted that a definitive 'Time to Fix' list did not exist however emergency fixes were responded to within a day, and there was a target of 'within 5 days' for a first visit to determine what action was required.

The Committee requested a complaints procedure clearly showing how tenants could report issues and escalate them when necessary.

RESOLVED: The Overview and Licensing Committee meeting noted and thanked Bromford Housing Association for their presentation given and provided feedback as necessary.

OS.218 **Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The purpose of the report was to receive the draft budget proposals for 2023-24 and latest Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance introduced the report and explained that its aim was to provide members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to question and gain clarification of any part of the draft Budget and MTF. The following parts of the report were discussed

Draft Budget Proposals

- Referendum on Council Tax increases limit had risen from 1.99% to 2.99% for District Councils.
- The three scenarios that featured in the report had been arrived at using modelling tools, and therefore represented a 'best guess' of likely outcomes during a period of unprecedented financial uncertainty.

Funding

- The Government had frozen the Business Rate Multiplier and confirmed local authorities would be compensated for any shortfalls.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments were not considered income however these would be made public from December Cabinet.

Expenditure

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- The Council would continue to be liable for future payments into the Local Government Pension Scheme to meet future pension liabilities for employees now transferred to Publica.
- Council fuel costs had increased by £310,000 per annum. This had been accounted for in the current year and was likely to remain at this level for future years.
- The Publica pay negotiations had concluded and resulted in a £1,925 payment per employee. This equated to 6% for the Publica wage bill and 7% for the Ubico wage bill. A 4% pay increase had been estimated for the following year.

Other Income

- Fees and charges would be increased to enable services to be delivered without further subsidisation by the Council. Some free services would also be reviewed to ensure they were being charged for fairly.

Reserves

- The current administration had previously managed to deliver balanced budgets without the need to use reserves, and the Council's reserves were in a strong position. It was likely however, that future expenditure would require the use of reserves until future balanced budgets could again be achieved.

RESOLVED: Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report that went to Cabinet on 4th November 2022 and provided feedback for Cabinet to consider on 9th January 2023.

OS.219 **Climate Change Emergency Strategy**

The purpose of the report was to receive a verbal update on progress to-date against the climate change strategy.

The Head of Climate Action delivered a verbal report supported by illustrations showing what actions were within the control of the Council, actions that could be influenced by the Council and actions that were not within the Council's sphere of influence. Details of the size and impact of these were also presented.

The Committee noted that there was a goal for the Council to achieve net zero carbon by 2030 and this work had moved ahead starting with low carbon heating for Council leisure centres already in place and work planned at Council offices at Trinity Road.

The Committee noted the positive effects from the introduction of agile working and the completion of analysis of employee work journeys.

The Committee noted that the carbon contribution of fuel used in Council vehicles had not reduced significantly.

The Committee noted the large number of place shaping initiatives that had been undertaken by the Council across the District and the positive affect these had on carbon emissions.

The Committee noted that the individual measures used to report carbon emissions would always be based on estimates and could never be 100% accurate, however the methodology employed over time had been consistent and therefore the reported trends were reliable and accurate.

The Committee noted the importance of 'Carbon Literacy' for employees which would provide information and advice that would enable Council officers and Members to consider when making decisions in their day to day service specific work.

RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the progress to date against the climate change strategy.

OS.220 **Leisure and Culture Options Update**

The purpose of this report was to receive a verbal update on the ongoing work on the Leisure and Culture contract.

The Assistant Director for Property and Regeneration provided a verbal update on the Leisure and Culture Contract procurement process that would be concluded in the New Year and confirmed that the outcome for the process will be on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda for January 2023.

RESOLVED: Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the ongoing work on the Leisure and Culture contract.

OS.221 **Financial, Council Priority, and Service Performance Report - 2022-23 Quarter 2**

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance and to provide information on the Council's financial position.

The Chief Executive provided a summary of the report and highlighted a number of items within the report.

The Committee noted that a number of initiatives had been introduced to provide support for residents making Council Tax payments and a performance measure monitoring council tax payment collection rates across the District had been introduced to detect any reduction in Council Tax payments due to the Cost Of Living Crisis.

The Committee noted that 71 Affordable Homes had been delivered within the year (target of 50 homes).

The Committee noted improvements in the time taken to validate Planning Applications.

RESOLVED: Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed overall progress on the Council priorities, service delivery and financial performance for 2022-23 Q2

OS.222 **Performance Task and Finish Group Update**

The purpose of the report was to receive a verbal update on progress to-date of the group from the Chair of the group.

The Chair of the Performance Task and Finish Group provided a verbal update on recent work completed by the Group.

The Committee noted that Cabinet Members had been interviewed and their comments distilled into a report that differentiates Management Indicators from Key Performance indicators to enable a report to be produced that will:

- Improve current KPIs
- Develop new KPIs that are more relevant and

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- Determine where Management Data should be distributed more widely to Members.

RESOLVED: Overview and Scrutiny noted the update on progress of the Performance Task and Finish Group.

OS.223 **Employment Policies Task and Finish Group**

The purpose of the report was to receive the draft terms of reference for the group and appoint two additional Members to the Employment Policies Task and Finish group.

The Chair of the Employment Policies Task and Finish Group provided an update on the initial work of the Group including the completion of its draft Terms of Reference and agreement that two additional Councillors would be required for Group. The Chief Executive indicated several Councillors had been nominated but the final selection had not been agreed.

RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the draft terms of reference, subject to any amendments being made and agreed the appointment of two Members to the group (names to be agreed).

OS.224 **Quarterly Digest**

The Quarterly Digest was noted.

OS.225 **Work Plan/Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee noted the Work Plan and several amendments.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 7.00 pm

Chair

(END)