

A meeting of the Cabinet and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee held at Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8 7NX at 6.30pm on 15 September 2014

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Pat Mason (Chairman)
Councillor James Husband (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Adrian Berrill-Cox
Councillor Barbara Campbell
Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell
Councillor Emma Dent Coad
Councillor David Lindsay
Councillor Andrew Lomas
Councillor Daniel Moylan
Councillor David Nicholls
Councillor Andrew Rinker

Others in attendance

Councillor Rock Feilding-Mellen (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Regeneration)
Councillor Robert Freeman (Chairman, Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor Joanna Gardner (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, IT and Corporate Services)
Councillor Mary Weale (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health)
Mark Benbow (Chief Community Safety Officer)
Martyn Carver (Principal Governance Manager)
Michael Clark (Director for Property and Customer Services)
Graham Hart (Economic Development Manager)
Jacqui Hird (Scrutiny Manager)
Nicholas Holgate (Town Clerk and Executive Director of Finance)
Eva Hrobonova (Tri-Borough Deputy Director of Public Health)
Susan Loynes (Electoral Services Manager)
Debbie Morris (Bi-Borough Director of Human Resources)
LeVerne Parker (Chief Solicitor and Monitoring Officer)
Jane Price (Bi-Borough Workforce Strategy and Information Manager)
Tony Redpath (Director of Strategy and Local Services)

A G E N D A

A1 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

A2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As a member of the Board of Transport for London, Cllr Moylan declared an interest in report A5 on Earl's Court Local Employment and Business Strategy. He left the room during discussions on this paper.

A3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

A4 TACKLING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The Chairman informed the Committee that a copy of the report had already been sent to members of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee and the Family and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee but no observations had been received. He added that Cllr Freeman, Chairman of the former Scrutiny Committee, was present, as was Cllr Lindsay, Chairman of the latter. Cllr Weale and Dr Hrobonova were also in attendance.

Cllr Weale introduced the paper which set out proposals to develop a programme of work to tackle childhood obesity across the Borough. There would be a general review of the problem and a pilot targeted at Golborne Ward. Part of the cost of the programme, which was being met from the public health budget, would be for academic research and an evaluation of the results by Imperial College.

Cllr Dent Coad drew attention to paragraph 4.3 which stated that high levels of childhood obesity were found in deprived wards. She also warned of the dangers of stigmatising children by identifying them as obese. Cllr Lomas commented that deprivation also resulted in a lack of essential vitamins so was a broader issue. Cllr Weale added that the programme would look at wider nutritional issues and also exercise but was essentially a programme to tackle obesity. Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell added that education was essential and that consumption of less food, of a higher nutritional value, was important. Intake requirements would vary between individuals.

Cllr Freeman welcomed the report. He asked about rolling out the results of the pilot to other areas and added that in order to judge the effectiveness of the programme longer-term outcomes would need to be measured. Cllr Weale said it was too early to discuss a possible roll-out: results of the pilot would need to be evaluated first. Funding for future years would also need to be addressed.

Cllr Lindsay asked what efforts would be made to increase the number of participants in sport. Cllr Weale accepted that the Council could do more. It was noted that the new Health and Wellbeing Board included sports officers so the importance of exercise would be taken into account. More work with schools would be carried out to increase participation in sport.

The report was received and noted.

A5 APPROVAL OF THE EARL'S COURT LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS STRATEGIC PLAN

Having declared an interest earlier in the meeting, Cllr. Moylan left the room during discussions about this paper.

Referring page 3, Cllr Dent Coad drew attention to the creation of 1,500 – 2,000 construction jobs a year during the build period. She asked what proportion of those jobs would be for local people. Mr Redpath said that details would be worked up once the contractors were known. Mr Hart added that the role of the workplace co-ordinator would be key in getting 'local' people (i.e. residents of RBKC or LBHF) into employment. Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell hoped that employment opportunities would not be restricted to manual labour. There was a need to look to the longer-term. There would be opportunities to start new businesses in the area.

Cllr Feilding-Mellen welcomed the comments and undertook to take them to the Cabinet meeting on 30 October.

A6 COMMUNITY SAFETY – CURRENT ISSUES

Cllr Lomas asked about the Community Police Team and whether the number of special constables could be increased by enhanced training opportunities. Mr Redpath said that there had been no drive to increase the number of 'specials' for several years. Cllr Gardner undertook to look into this.

Cllr Lomas commented on the use of the terminology of 'Islamic State' in the report and added that it was not the current description of this group. Mr Benbow undertook to feed this back to the Prevent Coordinator. Cllr Lomas also requested a copy of the Prevent delivery plan.

Action by: Mr Benbow

Referring to paragraph 2.1, Cllr Nicholls asked why 41 more police were being recruited if crime was falling. Cllr Gardner said that they would assist in dealing with 'lower level' incidents which were important to residents but currently were not prioritised by the police. Cllr Gardner also advised that she had sought clarification from the new Borough Police

Commander about 'abstractions' (situations where police are taken away from 'normal' duty to deal with emergencies).

Cllr Dent Coad suggested that, in tackling drugs, the police should put more resources into arresting the 'more respectable dealers' than concentrating on the easier arrest of drug users.

Cllr Lomas asked whether a specialist gangs unit was to be introduced for the Borough. Cllr Gardner said that this emerging problem had been recognised by the police and a unit was on the horizon.

The Committee noted that this was Mr Benbow's last meeting before his return to the London Borough of Redbridge. It thanked him for his work for the Borough.

The report was received and noted.

A7 PEOPLE PROFILE REPORT 2013-14

Members drew attention to paragraph 2.1.4 which referred to the relatively high sickness levels for RBKC staff, compared with other London Councils. Mrs Morris commented that average sickness had fallen from 9.6 days per person last year to 7.7 this year. Improvements were still needed, however. Cllr Gardner considered that the 10 day trigger for a sickness interview was too high and discussions were being held about reducing this to 5-6 days. The Committee noted that there were relatively few long-term absentees, thanks to earlier interventions by the Occupational Health Service. Mrs Morris undertook to send to members detailed figures about stress-related absences.

Action by: Mrs Morris

Cllr Nicholls asked about comparisons of sickness absence with the private sector. Cllr Gardner drew attention to paragraph 2.1.5 which set out that the private sector average was 7.6 days, compared with 8.7 days in the public sector. Cllr Mason commented that the private sector figures included only the top and largest companies and not the mass of medium and small businesses which, if included, might well increase the private sector sickness figures.

The Committee noted that the average age for RBKC staff was 45 years. This was normal for a public sector body. It also noted that about 1% of the workforce was beyond the former statutory retirement age.

The report was received and noted.

A8 LEARNING FROM THE RECENT ELECTIONS

Following a question from Cllr Campbell, Mr Redpath spoke in favour of on-the-job training for staff involved in the opening of postal votes. There was less time pressure than at the count and he believed on-the-job training was a better way of learning than running a training session in advance.

Cllr Dent Coad suggested that staff working at the count should be given further specific training in advance. She had been alarmed by the inexperience shown by some staff at the counts in May 2014. It was noted that some experienced count staff had not been released owing to work pressures. Members hoped that every effort would be made to ensure experienced staff were available at future counts.

Cllr Nicholls drew attention to a polling station sign in Sloane Avenue which had still not been removed. Mr Redpath apologised and undertook to arrange its removal.

Action by: Mr Redpath

The report was received and noted.

A9 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Chairman advised that CCSC and Public Realm Scrutiny were happy to continue with the joint Planning Services Working Group that met several times before the Local Elections. Cllr Rossi, Chairman of PRSC, had said that her committee would like a report of the work so far, and CCSC would also want to see the report. Cllr Campion, Chairman of the Working Group, had undertaken to write the update report.

Referring to paragraph 2.3, Cllr Moylan drew attention to the fact that the external auditor was due to attend the next meeting of the Committee. He recommended that the suggested review await the outcome of those discussions. If members' concerns were allayed at that meeting there would be no need to carry out a review of the budgeting process.

The Chairman asked that the Cabinet paper on budget out-turn be circulated again to members of the Committee and that they be asked to submit questions in advance. These would then be forwarded to the auditor.

Action by: Governance Services

Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell said that it would be useful for the auditors to compare the Council's performance with other local authorities. Cllr Moylan added that they should also be able to compare trends over the previous five or so years.

Cllr Rinker suggested that a review of the procurement process be undertaken.

RESOLVED – (i) to defer establishing a working group on budgeting and to re-consider after the next meeting; (ii) to ask the Scrutiny Steering Group to look at the suggestion of a procurement review and to decide where it should sit.

Action by: Scrutiny Manager

A10 TRI-BOROUGH UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)

Mr Holgate informed the Committee of the ongoing Critical Friends Board (CFB) review at Hammersmith. The CFB was due to reach its conclusions at the end of September. Mr Holgate expected that the outcome would not be a complete endorsement of Tri- and Bi-Borough. Although the reporting process was through Hammersmith, he hoped to make the review available in RBKC and Westminster should members wish to see it.

A11 CABINET MEETING – 18 SEPTEMBER

In respect of the reports on **19-27 Young Street (A9 and B4)**, the Committee discussed the proposal to appropriate the property for planning purposes under S122 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee noted that the use of this power effectively extinguished the rights of neighbouring landowners to object to development where their private rights (such as rights of light) were affected, providing planning permission had been granted. It noted that planning permission had, in this case, already been granted.

Mr Clark advised the Committee that eight properties would be affected, five of which were residential. Four of those would lose under 1% of daylight. He confirmed that the previous report to Cabinet in September 2012 had been confidential so would not have been seen by residents.

The Committee noted that the effect of the Cabinet decision as recommended would be that the appropriation would be fully in effect. It expressed concern that the affected landowners had not been given any notice of this decision.

Cllr Feilding-Mellen said that those affected would not be able to stop the development but would be entitled to compensation and be able to challenge the level of it. He spoke of the clear benefits of the development. Proceeds of the sale would be reinvested in Council services.

Cllr Moylan commented that although he was in favour of residential development, he objected to the Council extinguishing private property rights in private, without consulting or informing those affected. Residents

should be told of the eight affected addresses and allowed to make representations in advance of a decision.

The Committee

RESOLVED -

To recommend that the Cabinet defer this decision until its meeting on 30 October to allow the residents and businesses affected by the proposal to be so informed.

Action by: Governance Services

The Committee had already discussed under item A4 the Cabinet paper on **tackling childhood obesity**.

The remaining reports on the Cabinet agenda were noted.

A12 FORWARD PLAN - AS AT 5 SEPTEMBER

Noted.

A13 OTHER URGENT ITEMS

No other matters were discussed.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING:

There were no matters requiring the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm

Chairman