

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 20 November 2014

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at Town Hall Upper Street London N1 2UD on 20 November 2014 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Gallagher (Chair), Shaikh (Vice-Chair), Doolan, O'Sullivan, Gantly, O'Halloran, Parker, Russell, Gill and Kay

Councillor Troy Gallagher in the Chair

- 37** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**
Councillor Court and Councillor O'Sullivan for lateness
- 38** **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**
None
- 39** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**
None
- 40** **TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - TO FOLLOW (Item 4)**
RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2014 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them
- 41** **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)**
None
- 42** **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 6)**
None
- 43** **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)**
The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions and filming at meetings
- 44** **INCOME GENERATION SCRUTINY REVIEW WITNESS EVIDENCE - VERBAL (Item 8)**
Kevin O'Leary, Director of Environment and Regeneration was present at the meeting.

There were also three witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee as follows –

- Jonathan Flowers- Local Government Market Director, Capita PLC and Director, Veredus

A copy of the presentation was laid round (copy interleaved) and following the presentation the following main points were made –

- Middlesbrough had carried out a lot of work on income generation and this should be investigated

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- Capita were currently working with L.B.Barnet in relation to a number of services including offering a more extensive range of pest control services – Capita provided the investment and had a 51% share in the joint venture
- Reference was made to land sales and that the policy of 80% commercial rents in Barnet and the selling off of land did not conform to the policies adopted in Islington
- It was stated that there was office accommodation that could be used in Islington to gain income and create employment
- Jonathan Flowers stated that individual authorities needed to look at how they approached income generation as each authority would be different
- Jonathan Flowers expressed the view that any Trading Company established should be an 'arms length' company
- In response to a question Jonathan Flowers stated that in his view the partnership with Barnet was going well and their link with Staffordshire County Council on the schools service had been successful
- In response to a question about Governance arrangements it was stated that work had been done on this by Essex County Council
- There was a need for Councils to consider whether they wanted to compete in providing services that were already provided by local businesses
- A Member referred to a previous joint venture undertaken by the Council that had not made a profit and had not been successful. Islington wished to bring services back 'in house' where possible and that Barnet was not a good comparator
- The shift towards commercialism would mean a shift in the attitude of staff and a culture change
- Members expressed the view that the SID for the review and the Council's political priorities should be recirculated in order that the aims of the review were met when considering the recommendations
- Consideration should also be given to mutual and co-operative ventures and that the Council should focus on maximising income from services that they already operated and selling expertise

The Chair thanked Jonathan Flowers for attending and his presentation

James Gilchrist, Head of Greenspace and Leisure –L.B.Islington

A copy of the presentation was laid round, copy interleaved.

Following the presentation the following main points were made –

- Section 106 monies had been used to upgrade and refurbish the pitches at Market Road, however given the lack of greenspace in the borough it would be difficult to create any more pitches
- Reference was made to the event at Finsbury Square and that given the Council's financial position consideration should be given to holding more commercial events. However it was noted that a number of events had not been able to take place due to residents objections and there needed to clear guidelines set down for events so that residents could 'buy' into the process
- Members expressed the view that it was preferable to hold events and have sponsorship rather than have to close or limit use of open spaces
- Reference was made to the fact that Greenspace were carrying out work for the City of London and that carrying out work for other Councils/organisations/RSL's were areas that could be considered, together with looking at carrying out work for private residents. However competition may prove difficult as many competitors paid well below the LLW and all Islington staff received the LLW

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- A Member expressed the view that the public should be able to access open spaces given the lack of green space in the borough and rather than sponsoring parks it would be better to endeavour to get sponsorship for streets. It was stated that in some areas, such as conservation areas it was likely that residents would oppose such proposals and some companies may not want to advertise in low high profile sites
- The view was expressed that Islington was a thriving market for filming and it was stated that this was currently being further developed
- In response to a question it was stated that over the last 8 years the Council had lost around £200k in income from events that residents had objected to and sponsors often did not come back if they were constantly rejected
- A Member stated that there had been a problematic event at Highbury Fields in the past that had led to opposition for further events on Highbury Fields and there needed to be discussions with residents where events could be held but open space available for the public
- Reference was made to a recent event at Market Road which had been successful
- In response to a question as to monies that were received from the NWLA for recycling/wood chip etc. the Director of Environment and Regeneration stated that he would investigate and inform Members in order to assess if the Council were receiving good value
- If services were traded it needed to be ensured that services offered by the Council appeared first on appropriate websites
- Supply chains needed to be as short as possible to maximise income
- It was stated that parks were for all the public and not necessarily for a small group of residents
- Other initiatives could be Xmas markets and whilst some residents may object to funfairs many residents and children enjoyed them
- There could be sponsorship of the Xmas lights in the borough
- In response to a question it was stated that marketing of gardening and caretaking services were at the early stages of discussions and it was important to get these services right before marketing them to residents
- A skills audit of staff was being carried out in Environment and Regeneration
- The Chair referred to the Council possibly operating car parks in supermarkets

Steve Key, Finance and Property Services then made a presentation to the Committee, a copy of which in interleaved –

- The Telecare service provided assistance for vulnerable residents and provided a monitoring service in their home and the ability to contact a call centre
- There were 21 FTE staff to cover a 24 hour shift with 3 people on shift during the night and they dealt with other out of hours services as well.
- The out of hours service covered housing, anti-social behaviour, district nurses, contact Islington fall out, the emergency duty team and loan worker, The income is £290k received for these services against additional costs of £158k
- Islington costs of providing the service were within the mid range of competitors
- It was stated that there may be some scope to increase costs for the out of hours services or for tendering for work that could be provided to other boroughs or a partnership with Age UK
- Customer satisfaction with the service was good and there had been no serious injuries
- Marketing campaigns had been undertaken however this had not managed to result in increased numbers of clients

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Following the presentation the following issues were raised –

- The possibility of providing consultancy and scope to sell off surplus power generated by Bunhill Heat and Power
- Looking at providing an energy co-op – the example of Plymouth and Hackney energy co-ops was mentioned
- Solar panels could be put on housing estates and schools to generate income. It was noted that the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee were looking into this and an update could be provided to the Committee
- Reference was made to the need to involve residents where appropriate on income generation proposals
- It was noted that the first meeting of the Commercial Board has taken place and staff had been asked to propose suggestions for income generation. In response to a question it was stated that the Director of Environment and Regeneration could provide ongoing feedback to the Committee on staff ideas

The Chair thanked Steve Key for his presentation

The meeting ended at 10.00p.m.

CHAIR