

THE ASSEMBLY

3 MARCH 2004

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE

THE EXECUTIVE - RECENT BUSINESS	FOR DECISION
<p><i>This regular report on the work of the Executive is submitted under Article 2, Paragraph 9.2 of the Constitution.</i></p>	
<p>Summary</p>	
<p>This report summarises the work of the Executive on 27 January and 10 February 2004. It includes a recommendation from the Executive on the Procurement Best Value Review.</p>	
<p>It also summarises the decisions taken and the other matters considered by the Executive. Key issues have included:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Revenue Account Estimates and Rent Levels 2004 / 2005 (A3).• Consultation on the Proposed Urban Development Corporation for East London (A5).• More Choice in Lettings (A9).• Further Progress Report on the Education Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Contract (A14).	
<p>Recommendation / Reason</p>	
<p>1. Procurement Best Value Review</p>	
<p>The Executive received the final report of the Procurement Best Value Review, which presents the findings of the review and recommendations for the future. The Executive agreed, in order to achieve significant improvements over the next five years, to:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Procurement Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 of the Review Report.2. The principle of establishing a Strategic Procurement Unit, subject to final post evaluation and cost analysis;3. A growth bid of £150,000 to support the development of the Strategic Procurement Unit; and4. To receive a future report on the overall structure, role and responsibilities of the Strategic Procurement Unit from the Director of Finance following full job evaluation.	
<p>The Assembly is recommended to adopt the findings of the Procurement Best Value Review and agree the Improvement Plan.</p>	

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A DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE

27 January 2004

1. Axe Street Town Square Phases 1 and 2, Planning Brief

Received a report seeking to adopt the revised Planning Brief for Axe Street Car Park as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Agreed, in order to pave the way for the development of new affordable homes allied to the Town Square development, to:

1. The revised Axe Street Town Square Phases 1 and 2 Planning Brief as Supplementary Planning Guidance; and
2. Enter into partnership with East Thames Housing Group, as the Council's preferred developer for 100% affordable housing on the Axe Street site, subject to the agreement of the 'Housing Partnership' (the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships).

2. London Road / North Street Redevelopment

Received a report providing an update on the London Road / North Street project, which included an outline of the process for bringing the site forward for development through a proposed partnership with Metropolitan Housing Trust, one of the Council's preferred Registered Social Landlord partners.

Agreed, in order to begin the regeneration process for Barking Town Centre in line with the agreed Barking Town Centre Framework:

1. To the partnership with Metropolitan Housing Trust in order to produce a development brief for the London Road / North Street area;
2. To comprehensive stakeholder engagement in order to produce the development brief; and
3. That funding be sought to facilitate the stakeholder engagement.

3. Housing Revenue Account Estimates and Rent Levels 2004 / 2005

Received a report setting out a review of the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2003 / 2004 and 2004 / 2005 and the level of rents for Council Tenants for 2004 / 2005.

Agreed, in order to comply with the statutory duty to review rent levels annually and to ensure they conform with rent restructuring proposals, and to produce a balanced Housing Revenue Account, to:

1. The revised estimates for 2003 / 2004 and the estimates for 2004 / 2005 as set out on Appendix A of the report;
2. An average weekly rent increase of £2.22 per dwelling (3.8%);
3. Changes taking effect from 5 April 2004; and
4. Make representation to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to apply the lower Right to Buy Discount.

4. Land Disposal Sites: Revising Housing Development Schemes

Further to Minute 238 (26 November 2002), received a report setting out a revised balance of the mix of property tenure types and the reason for the changes in respect of the proposed development of the former allotment sites at Blackburne Road, Digby Gardens, Hedgemans Road and Reede Road.

Agreed, in order to deliver the Council's objectives in terms of capital receipts and a range of new homes to help meet local housing needs and aspirations, to proceed with the disposal and development of Blackburne Road, Digby Gardens, Hedgemans Road and Reede Road sites on the basis of the housing mix schemes shown in paragraph 3.3 of the report with Metropolitan Housing Trust and Stort Valley.

5. Consultation on the Proposed Urban Development Corporation for East London - Response of the Council

Received a report outlining the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's formal consultation paper on the proposed Urban Development Corporation (UDC) for East London, incorporating parts of Barking and Dagenham (a copy of the consultation paper was attached to the report).

Agreed, in order to assist the Council in achieving its Community Priorities of "Regenerating the Local Economy", and "Improving Health, Housing and Social Care", and respond by the deadline of 6 February 2004, to:

1. Endorse the Council's response to the UDC consultation (attached as Appendix 2 to the report subject to comments made by Members), noting that the Council is currently unable to endorse the establishment of the UDC due to fundamental issues remaining unresolved, and
2. A further report on the Government's final proposals to be presented to the Executive in due course, when a final decision on whether to support the establishment of the UDC will be presented to Members for consideration.

6. Barking Town Centre Partnership

Received a report setting out progress made in establishing collaborative working by agencies at national and sub regional level in pursuit of the plans set out in the Barking Town Centre Action Plan.

Agreed, the establishment of the Barking Town Centre Partnership and the draft Terms of Reference and Joint Statement of Intent, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, in order to provide a coordinated approach to the regeneration of Barking Town Centre.

7. Future Management of Garages

Received a report suggesting proposals to change the current policy on the letting and management of Council owned garages following a report to the Scrutiny Management Board on 25 June 2003 (Minute 12 refers).

Agreed, in order to reduce the void level for garages by 10% in the next financial year and to ensure that rental income is maximised and the repair and cleanliness of garages can be enhanced, to:

1. Introduce a reduced rental for new garage tenants for a six-month period as an incentive in areas where garages are difficult to let. Decisions on the setting of introductory rent charges to be delegated to the Director of Housing and Health in consultation with the Director of Finance;
2. Receive a further report on the issue of relaxing the policy around garage usage;
3. To the continuation of garage rental income being ring fenced and being used for:
 - a) The provision of additional security to garage sites.
 - b) The demolition of deteriorated sites where this is considered to be the only viable option.
 - c) The continuation of a refurbishment programme, to be delegated to the Director of Housing and Health in consultation with the relevant Community Housing Partnership Boards.
4. Increase rents in line with inflation by 19p per week net, which is in line with the Charging Policy Commission recommendations;
5. Set up a cleaning team to carry out cyclical cleaning of garage sites. The funding of this team to be met from the ring fenced garage income; and
6. The targets set for the reduction of void garages in the next financial year.

8. 61 Keir Hardie Way - Uplift of Restrictive Covenant

Received a report seeking authorisation to remove a restrictive covenant at 61 Kier Hardie Way, Dagenham in order that the developer named in the report can replace the existing single dwelling with a small block of 12 flats. It was noted that the issue of the covenant is not a Planning matter and therefore could not have been considered at the time planning permission was granted.

Agreed, to the removal of the restrictive covenant at 61 Keir Hardie Way, in order for the named developer to undertake a project compatible with the Community Priorities of 'Improving Health, Housing and Social Care'.

9. More Choice in Lettings

Received a report detailing the principles of More Choice In Lettings (MCIL), which outlined the alternative preference systems in operation. The report also proposed a programme of consultation.

Agreed, in order to enhance the Community Priority of 'Developing Rights and Responsibilities with the Local Community', to:

1. Adopt a MCIL policy based on a date order model using 3 bands:
 - a) A 'non active' band for those households who do not fall into a reasonable preference category;
 - b) An emergency or 'additional preference' band for those households who cannot continue in their present home; and
 - c) A 'reasonable preference band' for all other households.
2. Appoint the East London Lettings Consortium (ELLC) to administer the scheme in conjunction with the Council, as outlined in paragraph 4.6;
3. The public consultation process outlined in paragraph 6.3 of the report;
4. Arrangements for transitional protection as outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the report;
5. The Tenants Incentive Scheme outlined in paragraph 5.1 of the report; and
6. Single tender action for the purchase from specialist suppliers of the Novalet lettings system; Internet kiosks and property advertising magazine.

10. Regrading of an LPOR to LSMR Post and Continued Employment of a Consultant

Received a report proposing changes to the Service Manager (Admissions and Support for Schools) post in Policy and Management Services Division within the Education, Arts and Libraries Department. The report also sought approval for the continued employment of the existing part-time interim Manager / Consultant employed via an agency.

Agreed, following a review of customer facing services and the services provided to schools, which has resulted in an increase in scope and management responsibilities, to:

1. The upgrading of the LPOR post 'Service Manager (Admissions and Support for Schools)' to an LSMR post 'Head of Management Information and Customer Service' at spinal point 63;

2. The continued engagement of Ms Kathryn Livingston until the post is advertised and filled as quickly as possible; and
3. Waive the Constitution (Contract Rules) in order to continue to employ Ms Livingston.

11. Approval of LSMR Grades within the Leisure and Environmental Services and the Corporate Strategy Department

Received a report outlining changes to posts and grades within the Leisure and Environmental Services Department as a result of the organisational restructure within the Strategic Planning and Transportation Division and Regeneration and Implementation Division. The report also outlines the changes to two LSMR posts within the Corporate Strategy Department.

Agreed, in order to assist the Council in achieving its Community Priority of "Regenerating the Local Economy", to:

1. The changes and grading of eight posts to LSMR within the Leisure and Environmental Services Department, with an effective date of 15 October 2003;
2. The changes in responsibilities of two LSMR posts, and the grading of one of these posts with an effective date of 1 August 2003, the date from which the post has been occupied; and,
3. The application of a market supplement to the post of Group Manager (Strategic Transportation).

12. Approval of LSMR Grades within Corporate Strategy Department

Received a report which detailed how following the implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan (2001) within Corporate Communications, the post of Press and Public Relations Manager had expanded in scope, influence and responsibility.

Agreed, that the post of Press and Public Relations Manager be upgraded to LSMR spinal point 53 (£40,548), following the recent job evaluation which considered the increase in scope and management responsibilities of the post holder.

13. Town Hall Refurbishment

Received a report outlining a projected overspend and saving options considered and agreed by the Members Steering Group (Accommodation) as detailed in the report. Noted the revised project cost for the refurbishment of the Town Hall is £2,582,000.

Agreed, in order to improve facilities for the public and so assist in achieving the Community Priorities of "*Raising General Pride in the Borough*", "*Developing Rights and Responsibilities*" and "*Promoting Equal Opportunities and Celebrating Diversity*", that additional funding of £240,000 (to be spent in 2004 / 2005) be allocated for the refurbishment of the Town Hall in the Capital Programme. The funding to be determined as part of the review of the Capital Programme.

14. Further Progress Report on the Education Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Contract

Received a further update on the situation with regards to the signing of the Education Private Finance Initiative contract with the preferred bidder, Bouygues Education UK.

Agreed, that:

1. A further indemnity committing up to £1.4m towards an early works programme (in addition to £1.2m already committed), be given to Bouygues Education UK;
2. A provision for further legal fees up to £0.8m be included in the PFI capital programme budget; and
3. In the event that the PFI deal does not go ahead, the costs of up to £5.24m be funded from the PFI capital programme budget.

15. Homelessness Acts and Houses to Transfers

Received a report seeking amendments to the current Housing Allocations policy to conform with recent legislation.

Agreed, in order to comply with the Homeless Act 2002, to:

1. Adopt an open housing register and to delete the exclusion of owner occupiers and the residence qualification from the Housing Allocations policy;
2. Adopt the local connection categories as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report;
3. Adopt the policy in respect of assets and priority outlined in paragraph 8;
4. Delete section 12.1 from the Council's current Housing Allocations policy; and
5. Conduct ethnicity monitoring, following implementation of the revised policy, to ensure that the policy is not discriminatory in practice.

10 February

16. The Clevelands, The Wakerings, The Bloomfields Land Offer Report

Received a report providing an update on the freehold purchase of The Clevelands, The Bloomfields and The Wakerings development site by East Thames Housing Group. The report also set out the urgent need to agree terms for the sale of land to East Thames Housing Group in order to avoid the loss of Local Authority Social Housing Grant.

Agreed, in order to enable the development to proceed, providing 169 new homes, and ensure that £3.5 million of Local Authority Social Housing Grant is not lost, that:

1. The Clevelands, The Bloomfields and The Wakerings development site be sold to East Thames Housing Group for the sum stated in the report; and
2. The Director of Leisure and Environmental Services, under his delegated powers, agree the final disposal terms.

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Minutes, agenda and public reports for the Executive meeting held on 27 January and 10 February 2004.