

## **IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010

### **Present:**

Councillor Neil Reddin (Chairman)  
Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P. (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Graham Arthur, Colin Bloom, Eric Bosshard,  
Julian Grainger and Stephen Wells

### **Also Present:**

Councillor Peter Morgan

### **34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carr. Councillor Wells attended as alternate to Councillor Mellor.

### **35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **36 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

No questions had been received from members of the public.

### **37 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2009**

In agreeing the minutes, Councillor Grainger requested that the reference to costs related to carbon savings within Item 29: Carbon Management Fund: Progress Report 2009 be deleted from the minutes.

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009 be agreed.

### **38 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

#### **Report LDCS10017**

The Committee were advised that a discussion around the Aligning Policy and Finance Workstream would be held at the next meeting of Improvement and

Efficiency Sub Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010. Councillor Grainger recommended that a directory of policy should be developed following the identification of statutory and non-statutory services.

A report around other Councils' experiences of voice recognition technology would be considered later in the meeting.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

## **39 ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

### **Report CEO1054**

The Sub Committee received a report providing an update on the progress of the Organisational Improvement Programme definition phase following the commissioning of this work by the Improvement and Efficiency Sub Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009.

The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement outlined the three areas of cross-cutting work. These were the Customer Access Programme, Oneway Programme and Mobile and Flexible Working Programme, and included workstreams around Civic Centre accommodation, reception points, website upgrade and voice recognition.

In relation to the workstream around Civic Centre accommodation, discussions were currently taking place with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to relocate their staff to the Civic Centre site whilst the future of the service was considered. A potential co-location of partner services on the Civic Centre site would provide an additional income stream and would also enable further integration of delivery of front line services and greater efficiency in back office functions.

The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement explained that the plan of property works was in an advanced stage of development and would be considered by the Programme Board shortly. This plan identified a range of options regarding the future development and usage of office accommodation across the Civic Centre site for the consideration of Members. A Member underlined the importance of encouraging services to reduce their usage of office space where appropriate. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement highlighted that a range of options were being considered to incentivise better use of space.

Regarding future delivery of face-to-face customer service by Bromley Council, Members discussed a range of issues. The potential to develop a 'one-stop shop' in Bromley Town Centre was considered. A Member highlighted the importance of selecting the right location, and also noted that establishing customer service hubs in town centres might increase congestion. Another Member underlined the value of bringing local partners, such as the PCT and Police, into any 'one-stop shop' provision. Councillor Grainger highlighted the potential for a number of local community hubs across the borough. It was also important to consider how more

complex service enquiries might be accommodated in future.

In terms of the proposed upgrade to the website, a detailed specification had been produced regarding the future look and functionality of the website. However initial quotes had been disappointingly high. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement explained that the potential to invest in the existing web platform to provide additional functionality was now being considered. This would provide a better 'look' and higher level of functionality for the website, but would negate the need for big investment until support for the existing platform expired in 2014. A Member asked whether an off-the-shelf product might provide the necessary functionality. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement underlined the complexity and range of services delivered via the website, which suggested a more bespoke provision was required, but noted that investigations were ongoing into a range of potential products. A Member welcomed the caution shown as it was important to ensure future website development was both fit for purpose and good value for money.

**RESOLVED that progress made on the first phase projects within the Organisational Improvement Programme be noted.**

#### **40 VOICE RECOGNITION PROJECT**

##### **Report CEO1055**

The Sub Committee received a report presenting the findings of market research into the experiences of other local authorities who had implemented voice recognition technology for internal and external switchboard calls as well as some public-facing transactional services, including payments and simple service requests.

Officers outlined the experiences of three local authorities across London that had recently introduced voice recognition technology. Two of these local authorities had introduced voice recognition for internal and external calls, and their experience had been extremely positive. The London Borough of Wandsworth had initially utilised the functionality to allow residents to set up direct debits for the payment of Council Tax. This had proved highly successful so the Authority was now looking at increasing the functionality of their voice recognition system to include switchboard calls.

A Member queried the cost of adding additional functionality to existing voice recognition systems at a later date. The Assistant Director: Organisational Development confirmed that individual 'skill sets' could be purchased as needed, so future costs would therefore be proportionate.

Members discussed the benefits of introducing voice recognition technology. A Member highlighted the potential to realise maximum cashable savings by introducing voice recognition technology to process both internal and external switchboard calls as soon as possible. As well as efficiently directing callers, the introduction of a voice recognition system would also release existing switchboard

staff to support a wider range of customer service enquiries. The Assistant Director: Organisational Delivery explained that a process of data cleansing of phone number information would need to be undertaken prior to the introduction of a new system and would have wider organisational benefits.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the research findings around the experiences of other Local Authorities in implementing voice recognition technology be noted;**
- 2) that the implementation of voice recognition technology for both internal and external switchboard calls be supported.**

**41 LOCAL GOVERNMENT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**

**RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the item of business listed below as it was likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.**

**The following summary  
refers to a matter involving  
exempt information**

**42 LONDON EFFICIENCY CHALLENGE FEEDBACK**

**Report CEO1053**

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on the findings of the London Efficiency Challenge which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

**RESOLVED that the recommendations made by the London Efficiency Challenge team be noted.**

The Meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Chairman