

IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 18 April 2012

Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur (Chairman)

Councillors Julian Benington, Stephen Carr, Judi Ellis,
Robert Evans and Brian Humphrys

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP, Councillor Russell Mellor and Councillor Neil Reddin. Councillor Brian Humphrys attended as substitute for Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robert Evans declared that he was on the Management Board of the Pupil Referral Unit in relation to Item 12: Aligning Policy & Finance: Summary & Progress Report.

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 18TH JANUARY 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2012 be agreed.

38 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Report RES12063

Members noted that an update on progress in the aligning policy and finance reviews undertaken across a range of services would be provided later in the meeting.

RESOLVED that matters arising be noted.

39 INVEST TO SAVE

Report CEO1200

The Sub-Committee received a report outlining proposals in relation to the future management of invest to save proposals. It was proposed to introduce a new system that would encourage more invest to save bids and provide a responsive approval process for invest to save proposals. All bids requesting more than £10k investment would be reviewed by a new Officer Investment Panel which would meet for the first time on 25th April 2012 to consider the invest to save proposals received to date. Monitoring processes would also be introduced to ensure that savings were realised in line with the approved business case. As part of the proposals it was requested that authority to decide on business cases up to £200k be delegated from the Executive to Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee to facilitate a more efficient decision making process.

In considering the proposed future management of invest to save proposals, a Member underlined the need to ensure that the business case for new invest to save schemes would be evaluated with the same rigour as before by Officers and Members. The requirement for an invest to save scheme to demonstrate that it had a 'reasonable' payback period was also highlighted as an area of concern, and Members requested that this be amended to 'clearly defined' payback period. In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Organisational Improvement confirmed that project and set-up costs were included in the costs of an invest to save scheme and that the Officer Investment Panel would challenge all project costings when considering invest to save proposals. Another Member noted that Officers should be required to obtain the sponsorship of the relevant Portfolio Holder at an early stage in the development of all invest to save proposals.

RESOLVED that the Executive be requested to give Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee delegated authority to determine Invest to Save bids requiring up to £200k in Capital.

40 ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report CEO1196

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on the progress of the Organisational Improvement Programme.

The Shared Services Board, comprising of the Chief Executives and one other Chief Officer from Bromley, Bexley and Croydon continued to meet on a six weekly basis to review the workstreams with the greatest potential for sharing, which included Regulatory Services, Property Services, Shared Transport, Parking and Parks. The Library Shared Service with London Borough of Bexley had gone live on 1st January 2012, and in response to a Member's query, the Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that Officers were continuing to investigate potential savings that could be realised by moving to a Libraries' Trust.

The Project Manager: Organisational Improvement had been seconded for two days a week to the Public Health Transition Team at NHS London, supporting the transfer of Public Health from Primary Care Trusts to Local Authorities. Work was being undertaken with the six London Boroughs which made up the NHS South East London cluster to support the design of a Public Health model which was fit for purpose. Workshops were also being carried out with health and local authority leads from London Boroughs across the NHS South East London cluster to establish whether a shared model of public health was viable, and to consider if services could be shared across the cluster or two or more boroughs within the cluster. A Member highlighted the support that was being given to London Borough of Bexley to help analyse and challenge their Primary Care Trust's financial submission to the Department of Health which had led to them receiving the lowest Public Health shadow allocation across the country, and queried whether the level of funding allocated to Bromley was also being challenged. The Chief Executive confirmed that work was being undertaken to address the issue of funding across the NHS South East London cluster, and that this was also being taken forward by the Health and Well-being Board. In considering the public health offer in the Borough, a Member underlined the work being undertaken in the community to support healthy lifestyles by the Mottingham Community and Learning Shop and the Cotmandene Community Resource Centre.

In considering civic centre site accommodation, a Member queried whether options had been developed for the future use of Joseph Lancaster and Ann Springman Halls. The Chief Executive confirmed that following the completion of the refurbishment of North Block in May 2012, it was planned to vacate the Old Town Hall, Exchequer House, Joseph Lancaster and Ann Springman Halls. Significant savings would be realised from a reduction in site running costs whilst the future of these buildings was considered by Members.

With regard to customer service improvement, 'Tell Us Once', the service that allowed customers registering a death to inform several Council and Government departments at once had been live since October 2011. In response to a query from a Member, the Director of Resources confirmed that the Registrars Service had decided not to progress with the 'Tell Us Once' service for births at this time as there was less obvious customer benefit and no significant savings to be realised in introducing the facility.

An invest to save project to develop autism specific secondary provision within the Borough to meet a projected increase in demand for places over the next ten years and reduce the use of independent providers was currently being developed. In response to a query from a Member, the Director of Resources confirmed that the Local Authority took account of parental choice in the provision of schooling for their child and noted that the Local Authority had a duty to provide an appropriate placement for children with special educational needs. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement highlighted that the Council was making increasing use of Pupil Resource Agreements to work with parents in providing an appropriate placement for their child, although parents and carers did have the legal right to challenge the Local Authority if their preferred option was not funded.

In considering the recommendations of the New Technology Working Group, a Member highlighted the proposal to develop increased use of technology options, such as e-forms and social media. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that there was a need to use social media to both manage the Council's brand and communications and to engage with the community through a broad range of channels, consistent with other local authorities and private businesses. The Member also noted the proposal to centralise the management of Council web portals to provide increased consistency and efficiency and underlined the importance of ensuring that specialist knowledge was not lost.

A Member highlighted the need to investigate the potential to share services with the third sector and asked that this workstream be added to future updates on the Organisational Improvement Programme.

RESOLVED that progress made to date on projects lead by the Organisational Improvement Team and the new works projects that members of the team were currently supporting be noted.

41 TRANSITION REPORT (MOVING TOWARDS OUR CORPORATE OPERATING PRINCIPLES)

Report CEO1198

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on work to progress the Target Operating Model, which would ensure services were delivered in a way which supported the Council's long term vision. A number of key issues and opportunities had been identified including market testing and outsourcing, shared services, alternative delivery vehicles and the community right to challenge, driving value from existing and future third party suppliers and the need for service modernisation and transformation, and it was important that these and other key issues for the organisations were progressed in a structured and focused way.

In considering the community right to challenge, the Director of Resources confirmed that community groups and local authority employees would have the right to submit an expression of interest in taking over and running a local authority service. If the Local Authority accepted this challenge a procurement exercise would then be run in which organisations could bid to take over the running of the service. The Director of Resources confirmed that this would not usually apply to services already identified for closure. A Member underlined the benefits that could be realised by encouraging staff to develop social enterprises to deliver Council services, and queried the level of support that was being provided to staff.

Members also considered the community right to bid that would allow voluntary and community organisations to nominate an asset to be included on a list of 'assets of community value' managed by the Local Authority. If the owner of a listed asset wanted to sell this asset, a moratorium period would be triggered before the asset could be sold, giving community groups time to develop a proposal and raise capital to bid for the property when it came onto the open

market. The owner of the asset need not accept a lower bid but could take account of the value the service would bring to the community in accepting a bid. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement highlighted the issue of whether additional support should be provided to voluntary and community organisations in bidding for an asset or whether they should be treated the same as any other organisation.

RESOLVED that the Members' comments on the approach to be taken to progress the Target Operating Model be noted.

42 SHARED SERVICES UPDATE

Report CEO197

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on the shared services projects that were currently being progressed and outlining project delivery arrangements. The list of shared services projects that were in the scoping stage had become quite extensive, therefore the Shared Services Board, comprising of the Chief Executives and one other Chief Officer from Bromley, Bexley and Croydon, was focusing on five priority areas that appeared to have the most potential for progression as a shared service, which comprised Regulatory Services, Property Services, Shared Transport, Parking and Parks.

Members considered progress on a number of shared services projects. With regard to transport, a Member requested that any plans to share transport services would take into account the needs of other services that relied on transport, such as day centres. In considering school transport, a Member highlighted the potential for children to utilise alternate methods of transport such as public transport and the use of school vehicles where appropriate. The Project Officer, Organisational Improvement confirmed that a wide range of issues would be considered as part of the development of a detailed collaborative business case.

In considering the capacity for delivering projects, Members noted that project leads within the relevant services areas were progressing the prioritised shared services projects with the Chief Executives Shared Service Board monitoring progress on a six to eight weekly basis. To ensure momentum was maintained, it was proposed to assign a Director to each of the priority shared services projects, either within their own Borough or in one of the other two boroughs, and this proposal was being considered by the Chief Executives' and Leaders' Shared Services Boards.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The progress made to date on shared services projects be noted; and**
- 2) That Members comments on changes to improve project delivery of this workstream be noted.**

43 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 items 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.

44 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH JANUARY 2012

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2012 be agreed.

45 ALIGNING POLICY & FINANCE: SUMMARY & PROGRESS REPORT

The Sub-Committee considered the report and supported the recommendations.

The Meeting ended at 7.53 pm

Chairman