

IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 3 October 2012

Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur (Chairman)
Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Nicholas Bennett J.P., Eric Bosshard, Stephen Carr,
Judi Ellis, Robert Evans, Will Harmer and Russell Mellor

Also Present:

Councillor Peter Fookes

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Graham Arthur be appointed Chairman and Councillor Neil Reddin be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2012/13 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Julian Benington. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Will Harmer.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received from members of the public.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2012

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

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Report RES12156

Members noted that an update on workstreams developed to secure further savings across the Council would be provided later in the meeting.

RESOLVED that matters arising be noted.

7 SOCIAL MEDIA

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from the Customer Contact Manager outlining the corporate use of social media. Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube had all been used to promote key events and activities in the Borough, and directed users to the Bromley website where they could access more information and online services.

The Council's Facebook page currently received up to 30,000 views each month and 3,000 people followed the Council's main Twitter account. Twitter accounts also existed for other Council services including the Bromley museum and parking. The Bromley Snow Twitter account provided daily updates to subscribers between November and March around gritting in the Borough, with more regular, real time updates provided when weather deteriorated. These updates were pre-defined, scripted messages which required minimal resource to deliver. The Twitter account also guided users back to the Bromley website where further information on wintry weather could be accessed.

Facebook had been used to promote the youth activities programme delivered in parks across the Borough during Summer 2012. Printed media for the event had included a 'friendly URL' and QR code, and a Facebook advert had targeted 144,630 Facebook users who lived within 10 miles of Bromley. Following this marketing campaign, there had been a significant increase in attendees to the youth activities programme with approximately 25% of attendees finding out about the park day events via Facebook. The number of young people attending youth clubs in the Borough had also increased as a direct result of the Facebook campaign.

In considering the corporate use of social media, a Member highlighted the value of utilising social media sites as a way of sharing information with Bromley residents and queried whether this had supported channel shift to online services. The Customer Contact Manager confirmed that information through social media sites was often passed on by subscribers to other users, which had increased awareness of online services such as missed bin reporting.

Members then discussed the potential to offer a wider range of services via the website, including secure services such as council tax payment. The Customer Contact Manager confirmed that users were able to register with the Bromley website, but that other Bromley sites, such as Bromley Mylife and the Planning Portal had a separate registration process. To support further channel shift, auto fill would shortly be introduced for online forms.

In response to a Member's query around whether the number of phone queries to the Customer Contact Centre had decreased, the Head of Customer Service confirmed that channel shift to online services had reduced e-mail enquiries significantly and that there was a need to develop a strategy to support a shift from phone to online queries.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

8 RECEPTIONS UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from the Head of Customer Service providing an update on the programme to amalgamate reception points at the Bromley Civic Centre. Enhanced reception areas had been opened in Stockwell Building and North Block during Summer 2012, and an improved service was now offered which included a queue management system, electronic notice boards and self-service check in. A 'meet and greet' facility was offered in Stockwell reception at peak times, and customers also had access to a payment machine, four internet access PCs and internal phone lines.

Members considered the presentation. It was noted that since the new Stockwell reception had launched on 13th July 2012, 6914 customers had been served with 96.8% of customers served in less than 15 minutes. The proportion of customers served in less than 15 minutes was lower across the other reception areas on the Civic Centre site, and a Member highlighted the need to ensure that all receptions offered the most efficient service possible. The Head of Customer Service confirmed that work was continuing with team members to ensure that pinch points were identified and that waiting times were reduced as far as possible. It was noted that some additional capacity was available in North Block reception, and that spare booths could be utilised if staff were available. In considering the North Block reception, a Member requested that a tour of the new reception facilities be provided to Members

Another Member highlighted the need to ensure queuing times were managed in the evidence drop point reception as there was limited space and seating. The Head of Customer Service confirmed that work was being undertaken with Liberata to develop alternate arrangements for customers of this service, such as providing online or self service options, and that consideration was being given to opening additional reception points in Stockwell reception at peak times. The London Borough of Bexley had trained library staff to act as verification officers for this service, and there was potential to make a similar offer available in libraries across the Borough.

The Head of Customer Service noted that a customer satisfaction survey regarding the new arrangements would be undertaken following the closure of the Old Town Hall reception point in November 2012. The Chairman was pleased to note the success of the new arrangements and offered his thanks to Reception staff for the professional and caring service they provided to customers.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

9 WORKSTREAMS TO SECURE FURTHER SAVINGS

Report CEO1027

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on work being undertaken to secure further financial savings. Five corporate workstreams had been developed to drive forward this work:

- Baseline Review 'What' Services we Deliver
- 'How' we deliver services
- Sustainable Income Opportunities/Economic Growth
- Significant Financial Variables
- Organisational Implications.

In considering the five corporate workstreams, the Chairman highlighted the need to ensure that the Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee continued to be involved in providing scrutiny and challenge to the outcomes of the corporate workstreams. The London Borough of Bexley was also undertaking a baseline review of its services and developing options for future service delivery, and there was potential to develop further shared services across the two Boroughs as part of this review. This review would also seek to identify the level at which statutory duties should be delivered which could generate additional savings in service delivery.

A Member highlighted the importance of recognising the Local Authority's role in commissioning services. The Local Authority already commissioned a number of services and there was scope to consider alternate delivery models for services that were currently provided by the Local Authority where appropriate.

Another Member noted the key role of technology in delivering a range of services and underlined the need to consider how new and existing technology could be applied to services to generate further efficiencies. One of the recommendations of the New Technology Working Group had been to introduce the use of open source software where appropriate, and the Director of Resources confirmed that the use of open source software would be considered as part of the baseline review. The Director of Resources would review the implementation of this recommendation with the Chairman of the New Technology Working Group and the Head of ICT prior to the next meeting of Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee. Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP outlined recent work undertaken to increase the proportion of school admission applications submitted online which had the potential to both improve the customer offer and generate significant savings for the Local Authority, and suggested that the use of new and existing technology be included as a corporate workstream.

A Member highlighted the need to ensure those who worked and lived in the Borough were not disadvantaged in accessing services if they were not able to use a computer. There was potential to use libraries as multi-agency hubs delivering a range of services. It was also important to ensure services were delivered in an appropriate way to the most vulnerable residents.

RESOLVED that Members' comments and progress made to date on work to secure further financial savings be noted.

10 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.

11 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2012

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

The Meeting ended at 7.40 pm

Chairman