

IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 19 February 2013

Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur (Chairman)
Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Julian Benington, Nicholas Bennett J.P.,
Eric Bosshard and Russell Mellor

Also Present:

Councillor Peter Fookes

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Carr, Councillor Judi Ellis, Councillor Robert Evans and Councillor Will Harmer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received from members of the public.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD OCTOBER 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2012 be agreed.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Report RES13005

In considering Reception areas across the Civic Centre site, the Chairman raised concerns around the design of the new North Block Reception area which helped customers with housing and social care queries. This area had a high number of customers and it was important to ensure customers were able to discuss issues in private where appropriate. There was also a need for the right security measures to be put in place for customers and staff. The Chief Executive advised

Members that there was an emphasis on channel shift to more web-based services which should reduce the demand for on site Reception facilities, but that changes would be made to the design of the North Block Reception area to meet customer need where appropriate.

The Chairman also highlighted the Evidence Drop-off Point for Housing Benefit claimants and noted the potential to offer document handling and scanning services at libraries across the Borough. The Chief Executive confirmed that work was being undertaken to investigate additional services that could be offered in a community setting into the future.

The Chairman noted that Bromley would be one of four London Boroughs trialling the introduction of a benefit cap from 1st April 2013 before the measure was rolled out nationally by Autumn 2013. This limit would prevent households on benefits receiving more in income than the average household, initially set by the Department for Work and Pensions at £500 a week or £26k a year for households with children, and was likely to increase the use of the North Block Reception area and Evidence Drop-off Point for Housing Benefit claimants in the long term. The Chief Executive confirmed that work was being undertaken with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to meet this increased level of need and that support would be provided by these organisations during the period of the pilot scheme. Staff were working to contact Bromley residents who were likely to be impacted by the change in benefits. There were also plans to utilise the Lodge House on the Civic Centre site to provide an improved level of customer service to customers who needed assistance with benefit-related queries following the launch of the pilot scheme.

In considering the five corporate work streams that had been introduced to secure further financial savings, the Chief Executive confirmed that work was continuing on baseline reviews and to identify which Local Authority services could be considered statutory or non-statutory. The transformational agenda remained at the heart of service delivery and work was being undertaken to consider how services could best be delivered into the future and to identify opportunities for sustainable income and economic growth. Organisational change was being progressed to accommodate these areas of work and ensure the Local Authority was well-placed to continue to deliver high quality services into the future.

RESOLVED that matters arising be noted.

6 CARBON MANAGEMENT FUND: PROGRESS REPORT 2012/13

Report ES13014

In October 2008, the Executive agreed to establish a ring-fenced Carbon Management Fund to invest in energy efficiency projects, with the aim of helping to reduce the Local Authority's carbon emissions by 25% over five years and avoiding unnecessary energy costs from the Local Authority's operational property and street lighting. Carbon Management Fund investments were repaid by savings made to energy budgets. This allowed the Carbon Management Fund to

be re-invested in further schemes and also ensured that the avoided energy consumption and costs of projects permanently reduced the Council's revenue spend into the future. The Sub-Committee considered a report providing an update on the progress of Carbon Management Fund projects.

Members were advised that the projects funded through the Carbon Management Fund programme were expected to cumulatively avoid over £1.1m in unnecessary spend by 2018/19. Work to reduce carbon emissions and unnecessary energy costs would also reduce the impact of any increase in energy consumption and energy prices, which were expected to rise. The Environmental Development Manager also noted that there were a number of areas that could still benefit from Carbon Management Fund investment, potentially realising a further saving of up to £821k per annum for the Local Authority at current energy prices which represented a £3.9m cumulative saving since the Fund had been established.

In considering the report, a Member thanked the Environmental Development Manager for an excellent report. The Member was pleased to note the significant level of savings realised by the Carbon Management Fund and queried whether similar savings could be realised through more efficient use of heating. The Environmental Development Manager noted that the price of gas was approximately 30% that of electricity and that the potential savings were greater in targeting a reduction in the consumption of electricity than in gas.

The Vice-Chairman queried the energy prices used to calculate the avoided spend in the Project Overview table. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that avoided spend was generally based on the unit price of energy when each project first started, and that if energy prices rise, the actual avoided spend would be higher than reported. The Chairman requested that a graph comparing energy consumption by units used in the last 3-4 years be provided to the Members of the Sub Committee.

A Member also queried whether both academy and maintained schools could be supported to avoid unnecessary energy costs and reduce carbon emissions. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that schools were able to apply to the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme and to the RE:FIT Building Energy Efficiency Programme. These schemes funded energy efficiency projects that recouped the cost of any loan within a fixed period and permanently reduced the energy costs of schools into the future. The RE:FIT Building Energy Efficiency Programme was also project managed by another organisation, which would allow the school to concentrate its resources on teaching. The Environmental Development Manager noted that a circular was being drafted to schools to provide further information on these projects and the opportunities they represented for schools. This circular would also emphasise the non-financial benefits that could be realised by introducing energy efficiency measures, and Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP noted that Pickhurst Junior and Infant Schools had already benefitted from such a scheme and were monitoring the impact a more controlled environment was having on improving outcomes for pupils at the schools.

A Member queried why the cost of the Carbon Reduction Commitment Scheme

was expected to increase significantly in 2014/15. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that from 2014/15, street lighting could no longer be exempted from the scheme. The SON replacement Street Lighting project to introduce Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting would support a reduction in energy use from existing lanterns. It was confirmed that the planned replacement of 8,000 lighting columns across the Borough would only be undertaken where existing columns were no longer viable. The Environmental Development Manager also noted that, more generally, there would be some reduction in cost reflecting the Council's reduced operational property portfolio which would no longer include Ann Springman and Joseph Lancaster Buildings or the Old Town Hall, and information on reduced consumption and costs would be provided to the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The progress of the ten Invest to Save projects be noted;**
- 2) The contribution of the Invest to Save model in helping the Local Authority reduce its costs be endorsed;**
- 3) The scope for further savings made possible both by identifying new projects and accelerating the operation of the existing funds be noted; and,**
- 4) A further update report be provided to the Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee in January 2014.**

7 ANALYSIS OF STAFF LEAVERS

Report RES12191

At its meeting of 26th September 2012, the General Purposes and Licensing Committee received a report on the numbers of staff who left the Local Authority each year, outlining the reason for leaving and other relevant information. The General Purposes and Licensing Committee resolved to note the report and referred it to the Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee for Members' consideration.

In considering the report, the Chairman highlighted the low proportion of staff leavers who had responded to the most recent survey. The Chief Executive noted the low response rate but confirmed that all staff leavers were given an exit interview by their Line Manager or an HR Representative, and that any concerns the staff leaver had about working in the Local Authority could be identified during this interview.

RESOLVED that the analysis of staff leavers be noted.

8 ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENT POST COMPLETION REPORT (LPSA REWARD GRANT)

Report ES12036

At its meeting of 28th February 2012, the Environment PDS Committee considered an Environment Improvement Post Completion Report (LPSA Reward Grant) which provided an update on the measured outcome of the Environmental Improvements carried out over a two year period in areas outside of the Borough's main town centres. This report was provided to Members of the Sub-Committee for their consideration.

RESOLVED that the Environment Improvement Post Completion Report (LPSA Reward Grant) be noted.

9 INVEST TO SAVE

Report RES13047

At its meeting on 23rd May 2012, the Executive resolved that Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee be given delegated authority to determine Invest to Save Schemes requiring up to £200k but that a cap on the total expenditure to be agreed be set at £1m and up to a maximum of ten schemes. The Executive also resolved that Members be kept fully informed in the early stages of schemes being processed, and agreed that the Sub-Committee would monitor agreed Invest to Save schemes and receive details in the form of a spreadsheet listing all the approved schemes and progress with savings achieved. Post completion review reports would be provided when schemes had been completed showing the outcomes and savings that had been made. The Sub-Committee considered a report providing an update on the progress of Invest to Save Schemes.

In considering the summary of Invest to Save Schemes approved to date, a Member noted that a number of schemes exceeded the maximum payback period of five years. The Chief Accountant confirmed that some of the older schemes had a longer payback period. Going forward, in considering new Invest to Save Schemes, a payback period of up to five years would be the norm. The repayment to the Invest to Save fund would also include interest for the loan which would be higher for those schemes with a longer payback period.

Another Member noted that the summary did not reflect the non-financial benefits of Invest to Save Schemes, for example, the Library Self-Service and RFID Technology Scheme that had freed up library staff to undertake wider library duties. The Chief Accountant agreed that one of the main benefits of providing post completion review reports for individual schemes would be that the focus was not purely on financial outcomes but also whether scheme objectives had been met.

Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP highlighted the Trial of Revised Green Garden and

Textile Collection Service Scheme and noted that the cost saving realised by the scheme was difficult to measure. It was highlighted that £140k of the Invest to Save funding granted to this scheme had been repaid in 2011/12 from underspends elsewhere within the Environment Portfolio, and Members were concerned that this had undermined the aims and objectives of the Invest to Save scheme. The Chief Accountant confirmed that the savings and benefits arising from this scheme would be monitored against the total investment of £220k. Another Member noted that this scheme comprised two distinct elements and requested that they be detailed separately in the post completion review report when the scheme had concluded.

RESOLVED that the progress of Invest to Save Schemes 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 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANNING - POST COMPLETION REVIEW REPORTS: BIGGIN HILL LIBRARY AND SWIMMING POOL AND THE PAVILION DEVELOPMENT (REVISED REPORT)

Report DRR12025

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

The Meeting ended at 7.50 pm

Chairman