

IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2010

Present:

Councillor Neil Reddin (Chairman)

Councillors Graham Arthur, Eric Bosshard, Stephen Carr,
Robert Evans, Russell Jackson, Russell Mellor and Tony Owen

Also Present:

Councillors Peter Fookes

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Neil Reddin be appointed Chairman and Councillor Nicholas Bennett be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2010/11 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Stephen Carr and Councillor Graham Arthur.

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 11th FEBRUARY 2010

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2010 be agreed.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Report LDCS10081

The Committee were advised that an update regarding the Learning Disabilities

item would be provided at the next meeting of Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7 LONDON EFFICIENCY CHALLENGE FEEDBACK AND ACTION PLAN

Report CEO1057

The Sub-Committee received an update on the findings of the second part of the London Efficiency Challenge which took place on 13th January 2010, from Jan Willis, Director of Finance at Haringey Council, who had been a member of the London Efficiency Challenge team for Bromley.

There was general agreement by the Challenge Team that the alignment of various cross-cutting change programmes under the Organisational Improvement Programme was a positive step in the right direction. It was also seen as encouraging that the four main projects that were identified by the Challenge Team as areas to improve and increase efficiency were projects that the Organisational Improvement Programme had already been focused on, namely mobile and flexible working, accommodation rationalisation, customer access, e-payments/transactions and joint working and shared services.

Overall it was recognised that Bromley Council was in a strong position, already benefiting from lean processes and a strong performance management culture. However further efficiencies would be more difficult to achieve, and it was important to go forward with a more corporate approach to streamlining processes, including consideration of a new model for performance centre management.

The recent staff survey had highlighted the importance of promoting innovation by managers and front line staff, and ensuring managers had the capacity to drive forward change. Members also had a key role in identifying new ideas and spearheading change across the organisation. The Chief Executive confirmed that the issues raised by the staff survey were being considered by Chief Officers and that this information would shortly be provided to Members.

Jan Willis highlighted that skills would be a key issue in developing future efficiencies. A Member underlined that the identification of skills had already been recognised by the HR Working Group and that utilising staff knowledge and innovation would be key to future efficiencies. It was also important to promote techniques such as zero-based budgeting.

Members discussed the implications of the Total Place agenda. The Chief Executive explained that this new approach would look at the totality of public spend across the borough, and that future work to develop services and identify efficiencies could then be applied across a range of partners.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the recommendations made by the London Efficiency Challenge team be noted;**
- 2) the actions proposed by Chief Officers and the Organisational Improvement Team be noted.**

8 ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Report CEO1058

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on the progress made on the first phase projects within the Organisational Improvement Programme.

With regard to the workstream around Civic Centre Accommodation, the Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that work was ongoing to set out a high level options appraisal to Members around the future of the Civic Centre site for the short, medium and long term. A Member was concerned that a move towards a 'one stop shop' reception point might reduce specialist knowledge. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that if selected as an option a process would be developed to ensure that specialist enquiries could be processed effectively.

The planned relocation of 50-60 Primary Care Trust Staff to the Civic Centre site on a short term lease was ongoing, with work being undertaken with the Director of Environmental Services to pilot mobile and flexible working in St Blaise Building to ensure sufficient office space became available within the specified timeframe of 6-9 months and at minimum cost. If the Primary Care Trust was unable to move onto the site, there were a number of other teams that could be accommodated.

The Customer Access programme was progressing, with plans to provide additional capacity for the Customer Contact Centre in Rochester Block by mid-September 2010. This would support further service migration to the Customer Contact Centre, including Street Services enquiries from 13th June 2010. The Chairman highlighted the importance of undertaking analysis of the calls received by the Contact Centre. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that this would be an integral part of the new Contact Centre Manager's role.

Follow the endorsement of the Voice Recognition project at the meeting of Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee on 11th February 2010, a Voice Recognition supplier had been procured and the software had been successfully installed and integrated with the Council's network and telephony system. Roll out of the technology to an internal test group had commenced on 27th May 2010 and the system would go live to all staff and Members on 14th June 2010.

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

9 PRESENTATION ON CUSTOMER ACCESS RESEARCH

The Sub Committee received a presentation on the findings of research into customer access from the Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement. The telephone remained the primary method of contact, but use of the website and e-mail had increased in popularity, with a higher proportion of Bromley residents having access to the internet than the national average. Whilst awareness of the website had improved since 2005, there was a relatively low understanding of the transactions that could be made online.

A Member highlighted the need to publicise the online transactions available to Bromley residents. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that promotion of this facility would be undertaken following improvements to transactional capability. Another Member asked how many Bromley residents were accessing the website through mobile devices. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement explained that approximately 30% of website access was through a mobile device.

A Member underlined the importance of providing good customer service to those who did not have access to the internet, particularly vulnerable residents who were likely to have more complex enquiries.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

10 PARTNERSHIP WORKING - WEB DEVELOPMENT

Report CEO1059

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members with the work undertaken by the Organisational Improvement Team to develop a joint-bid with Bexley Council for £500,000 of funding from Capital Ambition to secure funding for web development.

The further development of the Bromley website had been identified as key to achieving the corporate outcomes set out in the Corporate Operating Principles model; to deliver a reduction in processing costs and avoidable contact and to make a high volume of transactional services available online. Previously work had been undertaken to investigate the possibility of joint-tendering, but costs had been excessive.

The joint-bid with Bexley Council sought to pursue the development of several critical areas of shared service provision. These included investment in a joint web platform, delivery of an improved range of fully transactional online services and using the initial pilot to explore further opportunities for shared services and functions.

Members discussed a range of issues around the proposed improved functionality of the website and how this might impact staffing costs. The Organisational

Improvement Programme Manager confirmed that future staffing levels would be a matter for Member consideration. Another Member noted that open source software, such as Paypal, might offer additional functionality. The Organisational Improvement Programme Manager highlighted a range of issues with using open source software but confirmed that a number of options had been considered in improving the functionality of the website.

A Member highlighted the impact of the Total Place agenda, and underlined the potential to work with key partners on web development. The Chairman noted that working more closely with partners would be a key step in the medium term, but that in the short term, partnership with Local Authorities would be more productive as similar services were provided.

RESOLVED that the bid to Capital Ambition on web development be endorsed.

11 ALIGNING POLICY AND FINANCE

Report CEX1060

The Sub-Committee received a report explaining in broad terms the legal duties placed on a local authority whether by Statute or some other mechanism such as custom, practice, contracts or guidance. This work was at an early stage of development, but that it did provide some guidance to Members to support future decision making.

The Chairman queried the impact of the new Power of Competence from Government. The Chief Executive anticipated that this power would allow more flexibility in how funding was spent.

RESOLVED that the work carried out on the first tranche of the Aligning Policy and Finance project be noted.

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

13 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH FEBRUARY 2010

RESOLVED that the minutes be agreed.

The Meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chairman