

From: Brand, Colin
Sent: 10 August 2015 10:55
To: Kasab, Onay
Subject: RE: Update Following Joint Soft Market Testing

Dear Onay

I acknowledge receipt of your e mail and whilst I note your comments, I have nothing further to add at this stage.

Kind regards

Colin

Colin Brand
Assistant Director
Leisure and Culture
London Borough of Bromley
0208 313 4107
colin.brand@bromley.gov.uk

From: Kasab, Onay [<mailto:Onay.Kasab@unitetheunion.org>]
Sent: 07 August 2015 16:35
To: Brand, Colin
Subject: RE: Update Following Joint Soft Market Testing

Dear Colin,

I too have taken another look at the report from the Council.

Para 3.5.25 in bold states:

"Given that the Council needs to save £60 million over the next four years how do you feel about the overall proposals for the library service"

51% were not supportive of the Councils proposals. This clearly is not a big enough majority for the Council to take notice of.

Yet, when the Council asks about the Community management proposal and as reported in para 3.4.18 and appears to get 58% in favour, the difference of the 7% in the responses in the questions mean that in the latter case, its justified to go ahead. Yet this needs looking into more closely - the question was heavily weighted to get the answer the council wanted by implying that this was the only way to keep the libraries open. In such circumstances of course people will vote for what they think is the only option to keep the library open. The consultation of course fails to mention the millions stashed in reserves, assets and the surplus.

For Unite para 3.7.4 is the key "The results from the consultation questionnaires showed that people were more supportive of a service run directly by the Council (supported by 83% of respondents)"

In the current climate where the Tory government is attacking trade unions ability to take strike action through the implementation of restrictions linked to turn outs and majorities in ballots, maybe the Tories need to look closer to home. Based on the criteria they want to

apply to the trade unions, the library consultation results do not give Bromley Council a mandate.

Onay Kasab
Regional Officer
Unite The Trade Union

From: Brand, Colin [Colin.Brand@bromley.gov.uk]
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2015 8:37 AM
To: Kasab, Onay
Subject: RE: Update Following Joint Soft Market Testing

Dear Onay

Thank you for your comments in response to my letter of the 24th July 2015, however, it does appear from your comments that you may have misunderstood the process that we are engaged in. Following the debate at the Renewal and Recreation Committee on the 18th March 2015, members agreed the implementation of the 'Library Strategy'. This is the work that we are now engaged in and this further piece of consultation is designed to inform in more detail the next round of decision making later this year. I previously notified you that we anticipated consulting with the public and with staff following the outcome of the soft market testing questionnaire in my letter to all staff dated 18th May 2015 which was copied to the trade unions.

With regard to your assertion that the majority of people responded "no" to a question "In light of £60m of cuts were people prepared to accept any of the Councils proposals", having re-looked at the original survey, we did not actually ask this question so I am unable to comment further.

We have now undertaken a soft market testing exercise which clarified that the market would be able to continue to deliver the range of services currently provided to library users whilst reducing the Council's operating costs. We are also aware that during the previous round of consultation on the wider library strategy, there was some confusion about what was meant by a commissioned library service. This round of consultation seeks to ensure that respondents are in a position to make an informed decision about the options, and gives them the option to make any alternative suggestions they have.

The outcome of this consultation will be presented alongside the outcome of the soft market testing exercise and community right to challenge notice to the committee in the autumn so that members make an informed decision about whether or not to go to the market. No decisions have yet been taken on what option if any to pursue.

In response to your question about business case, I assume you refer to the process for identifying community management. This tender process has already commenced as was agreed at the Renewal & Recreation Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee on 18th March 2015, and as I notified staff in a letter dated 12th May 2015 which was copied to the Trade Unions. The process for identifying community management arrangements are as follows:

- Community organisations were asked to submit a registration of interest form which provided a very basic outline of their business case for community libraries.
- These forms were scored and the three highest scoring organisations for each library will be invited to submit a business plan.
- The Council will be scrutinising these community management proposals to ensure that what is suggested is sustainable and meet some core requirements so that residents continue to benefit from a quality library service. These core requirements were set out in a specification which was published in the Information Pack which was available for download from the Council's website while the opportunity was advertised.
- Following negotiation, community organisations will make their final business plan submission. Should the Council accept that their bid offers value for money and decide to award the contract, the community organisation will enter into a contract with the Council to deliver community management arrangements.
- It is expected that the Council will make a decision about whether or not to award contracts for community management in the New Year.

As outlined in my letter market testing or tendering services is commercially and politically sensitive and therefore there are various elements of the process that it is not possible to share with you in its fullest detail. For that reason we are unable to provide you with details of who has expressed an interest in our community management arrangements

You may not be surprised to hear that I do not agree with your comments with regard to the timing of the consultation. We are not as you imply running the consultation just in August. As you will be aware from my recent letter, the consultation period runs from the 27th July through to the 16th September 2015 thus affording anyone who would want the opportunity to complete the survey to do so, through either a hard copy or on line. The face to face surveys will be conducted over the full period of consultation period in order to ensure a cross section of responses. Staff, trade unions and departmental representatives have been invited to submit their comments in the same timeframe. This period for consultation follows the Cabinet Office Guidance on consultation principles.

Kind regards

Colin

Colin Brand
Assistant Director
Leisure and Culture
London Borough of Bromley
0208 313 4107
colin.brand@bromley.gov.uk

From: Kasab, Onay [<mailto:Onay.Kasab@unitetheunion.org>]
Sent: 27 July 2015 14:24
To: Brand, Colin
Subject: Update Following Joint Soft Market Testing

Dear Colin,

I am responding to your letter dated 24th July in relation to the Library Service.

I do of course have to start by making clear to you how angry staff will be to hear that despite the results of your very own consultation, the Council is pushing ahead with its plans. The further consultation seems like little more than a tired effort to keep asking the same question until you finally get the answer you want. During the consultation meeting that I attended, you made clear that if there was not great public support demonstrated through the consultation, the Council would need to reconsider. What happened to this commitment? In your letter you state:

“The purpose of the consultation is to establish whether a commissioned library service which continues to deliver the existing range of library services is preferable to a library service which is directly delivered by the Council, but must make service reductions to achieve savings”

You had your answer last time when the previous survey asked if in the light of £60 million of cuts, were people prepared to accept any of the Councils proposals? The majority said “no”. So what’s changed?

You have stated in your letter that there is a market interest. Will you let us know from who? On Community Management you say you have a good number of expressions of interest. Again, will you let us know at this stage from who?

Will you also confirm the contractual position – by making a business case, will the interested parties be deemed to have made a bid and then be contractually bound to stay the course?

The Councils proposals are not supported by staff and have limited public support as proven by the consultation exercise you carried out previously. To now restart an exercise, by giving notice on 24th July that you are to start on 27th July and run the exercise when many people are away in August takes cynicism to new heights.

This is not public consultation – it is a farce. The Council clearly care more for property speculation than they do for services or for what the community want. Unite will shine a torch on the activities of the Council to make sure that our services are not sold off in the dark.

Onay Kasab
Regional Officer
Unite The Trade Union