

Decision Maker: Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee

Date: 3 September 2019

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Contact Officer: Lisa Thornley, Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 020 8461 7566 E-mail: lisa.thornley@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Mark Bowen, Director of Corporate Services

Ward: N/A

1. Reason for report

1.1 For Members to monitor progress against actions outstanding from previous meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **That Members note the report.**

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: None

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy. The Committee is regularly updated on matters outstanding from previous meetings.
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No cost
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Democratic Services
 4. Total current budget for this head: £358,740
 5. Source of funding: 2019/20 revenue budget
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): There are 8 posts (6.79 fte) in the Democratic Services Team.
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Monitoring the Committee's matters outstanding can take up to two hours per meeting.
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable. The report does not involve an executive decision
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The report is intended primarily for Members of this Committee.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

This report provides updates on progress achieved in regard to requests made by the Committee at previous meetings. Following each meeting, required actions are listed and monitored to ensure that any outstanding issues are addressed in a timely fashion.

All matters outstanding from previous Minutes have been completed as set out in Appendix A to this report.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children, Policy, Financial, Personnel, Legal and Procurement Implications.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	-

PROGRESS ON MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

APPENDIX A

<u>Minute Number/Title</u>	<u>Updates/Feedback Requested</u>	<u>Action By</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
<p>Minute 5 – 02.07.19 Minutes of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee Meeting held on 6 March 2019</p>	<p>In regard to Provision of Library Services – Contract Performance Report (Minute 92 of the previous meeting on 6 March 2019), Councillor Allen submitted a statement which raised various concerns. Feedback on this statement was requested.</p>	<p>Principal Client, Libraries / GLL</p>	<p>Information below sent to RR&H PDS Members via e-mail on 18 July 2019. Action completed.</p>

Response

The Contract Performance Report to the Committee on 6 March 2019 showed that the instances where short closures had occurred were due to staff failing to report for work as rostered. These closures were not the result of vacancies held at the libraries affected and, as the report notes, relief staff were quickly found from nearby libraries. GLL report that there are currently a total of less than 3 full time vacancies within the Library Service. There have been no library closures during the strike period which commenced on 6th June.

Regarding negotiations with the union, GLL have reported that they held one meeting with union representative during the current dispute which was quickly terminated by the union. They have recently been contacted again by the union and have proposed a date to meet.

GLL have been asked to comment on the specific bulleted items raised and their responses are inserted in italics below the original comments.

- Unqualified people being brought in to temporarily cover vacancies.

During the strike, libraries have been managed by Bromley Libraries staff who are not taking strike action and by the GLL Libraries Divisional Team, all of whom are experienced qualified librarians. In addition, we use sessional staff, all of whom are trained to work in libraries and some who also work in leisure centres from time to time.

- Temporary upgrading of staff with no accompanying pay uplift.

We are not aware that this has happened and have asked the union to supply details. We have, however, asked staff to work to their job descriptions.

- Lack of consultation on reorganisation.

We have not consulted on reorganisation but will do so when we have completed proposals for a restructure.

- Additional duties being imposed without regard to overloading staff, suitable training or remuneration.

As stated above, we have not imposed additional duties on staff but we have asked them to fulfil their contracts.

- Staff I have spoken to know nothing of the 13 week training courses mentioned on page 19.

Members of staff from Bromley have attended some of the course modules. The course has 13 modules, rather than lasting 13 weeks.

- Training courses are mainly leisure oriented.

A number of courses relate to buildings management and health and safety but they are not intended to be leisure related and have wider application.

- Training courses expect people on zero hours contracts to travel e.g. to east London.

We pay expenses for staff attending training courses at their normal rate and would normally also pay for travel time.

- Zero hours and casual workers are moved from place to place, staff and management do not know who will turn up, some of the infill people are unable or unwilling to do library work incl. read to or talk to children.

Sessional staff are rostered to work in libraries; managers should know who is on duty each day as a central timetable is maintained. Wherever possible we send sessional staff to a specific library so they can get to know colleagues and customers. All are trained; all should be able to work with customers of all ages, from young children to older people. As many sessional staff are students, they often relate particularly well to children and young people. We also intend to provide an excellent Summer Reading Challenge programme despite the strike.

- Librarians are being brought from other parts of London e.g. a prisons library manager turned up at Beckenham, or GLL is using leisure centre managers not library people.

Librarians do not simply 'turn up'. All staff members are rostered to work in specific libraries. The member of staff referred to in this comment is an experienced librarian who works in the GLL's Central Libraries Division; she has worked in public libraries and now has oversight of all prison libraries managed by GLL. Even new casual staff are trained in library duties.

- Library users value their local team and like to see the same staff regularly.

Library users do value their local team. However, all covering library staff have been welcomed and have indeed been welcoming to customers. We have found that members of the public have been pleased that their local libraries are open during the strike, and have commented favourably on the high quality of customer service they have experienced.

- On page 19 at the top of the page, GLL's 'formulaic' approach (a strange word to use), includes attractive building and staff training. The new signage on all the libraries and other GLL facilities is poorly designed and looks distinctly tacky and the staff training does not seem to be assisting operations.

The answer given that this refers to was explaining that GLL have a proven formula for the provision of library services which works well in all other library partnerships. The new signage is designed to direct customers to libraries in the Borough, and it does that effectively, following GLL's standard branding used widely across the country. Staff training is being undertaken systematically and certainly works in other areas. We have had no adverse feedback.

The contract is rigorously monitored by the Library Client Team. Since the commencement of the contract in November 2017 performance has been reported to Members for their scrutiny on four occasions so far – RR&H PDS on 27th March 2018, 18th September 2018 and 6th March 2019 and to the Contracts & Commissioning Sub-Committee on 19th September 2018. A further review is due for presentation to the September PDS Committee.

There have been occasional late openings due to staff sickness, and some minor IT outages which were reported by GLL to the Client Team along with mitigation which was duly considered. The main IT issues have related to the automated sorters which were old at the time of transfer and which GLL have been systematically replacing to an agreed programme.

Minute 7A – 02.07.19 Budget Monitoring 2019/20	Councillor Bear requested the Chief Planner be contacted to explain the reasons why the projected income deficit of £278k within Building Control was so vastly different to that of the 3164k reported the previous year.	Chief Planner	Information below sent to members via e-mail on 5 July 2019. Action completed.
<p><u>Response</u></p> <p>The Building Control (BC) Team operates in a market that is open to direct competition with private Building Control Inspector Services. This means that people (householders, builders, developers) can choose to use the Council service or a private service. The Council has to: - process applications that are submitted to it and publish its charge rates, and to 'break even' with no ongoing surplus or deficit. The private services do not have to do so.</p> <p>The clearest reason for reduced income is the team's limited capacity. We have lost staff but have not been able to recruit successfully particularly when experienced staff leave. This is a problem with all of the professional BC staff levels. It is a widespread problem for Councils. In short, the private services have been able to offer more attractive terms to staff.</p> <p>We do get some concerns or complaints about the Council's BC service but these are relatively few. The Council's pricing also is not a known problem but it can be difficult to obtain full comparisons.</p> <p>Within the last month we have heard that some of the private services are leaving the market and this may assist recruitment in the longer term. Our wider response to the problem you identify has been to seek sharing arrangements with our neighbouring Bexley Council and our Head of BC, John Branchett, is shared from/with Bexley. This creates a larger pool of experience amongst other things and has been very helpful.</p>			