

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 10 September 2020

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

Title: SCRUTINY OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Chief Officer: Ade Adetosoye OBE, Chief Executive

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

This report provides a written update to inform the scrutiny of the Chief Executive at Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members are requested to note the report.

3. COMMENTARY

Introduction

3.1 Since my previous scrutiny session in February 2020, I can provide the following updates:

- Covid 19 Update;
- Transformation Programme Update

3.2 COVID-19 Response

Since my last committee report to Members in May 2020 on our response to COVID-19, I can provide the following summary of key updates on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

3.3 Recovery planning

As an organisation and as directed by the Leader who is the strategic sponsor of the Council's COVID-19 response, we have started to outline our planning arrangements for the Council's recovery for the next 12 months.

The guiding principles for our recovery approach are the three 'Rs':

- **Restore:** Restoring essential services back to pre-COVID-19 capacity
- **Retain:** Retaining new ways of working or any service improvements/innovation as a result of our management of the COVID-19 crisis
- **Reinvent:** Looking at our processes and developing new ways of working that should be or will be created

3.4 Each member of the senior leadership team has developed their own service area recovery plan, which captures the short, medium and long term operational actions required to restore service capacity, retain new ways of working and service improvement, and reinvent services and processes to be more effective in a post-COVID-19 world.

3.5 The Council's overarching strategic recovery plan is set out across five themes

- **People:** including staff and contractors and how we return safely to the workplace; reviewing our culture, working practices and communications;
- **Place:** increasing the safety and accessibility of our town centres, parks and green spaces;
- **Accommodation:** improving our utilisation of public buildings and improving digital access;
- **Finance:** Revision and streamlining of financial processes and strategies;
- **Future Resilience:** Collaboration with partners, including the voluntary sector to ensure we are well equipped to deal with future challenges, including a review of our workforce strategy.

3.6 Our overarching strategic recovery plan is reviewed monthly by the Chief Executive with support from the Chief Executive's Office and progress is reported to the C-19 strategic group. The recovery plan is underpinned by an action plan, which captures key actions across all service areas and our collective efforts to facilitate the wider social and economic recovery of the borough in partnership with local agencies and also with our residents and the wider voluntary and community sector. The weekly COVID-19 strategic group, chaired by the Chief Executive, continues to meet weekly to oversee the delivery of the recovery plan.

3.7 Our recovery approach is informed by regular communications and engagement with staff, trade unions and Departmental Representatives. We are also working closely through the Borough Partnership Forum.

3.8 Learning key lessons and planning assumptions for a second wave

We are also currently preparing our planning arrangements, both as an organisation and with multi-agency partners, to respond appropriately and to scale in the event of a second COVID-19 wave in autumn/winter 2020. This will include the preparation of an Emergency Response Plan to include commitment from community partners.

3.9 As part of our planning, we have captured the learning from the first wave response to the COVID-19 pandemic and incorporated this into our recovery planning arrangements. Each service area has completed a lessons learnt assessment, identifying what went well during our response to the first wave, what needs improving and how each service will respond to a second wave. Using this learning, we have developed an overarching risk assessment document which we review on a monthly basis and determine how to mitigate these risks as needed.

3.10 Staff wellbeing survey – May 2020

As an organisation, we know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our staff, many of whom have been asked to adapt their ways of working entirely, take on new roles often outside of their normal field of expertise, and to go above and beyond to support our residents and service users in Bromley.

3.11 We therefore ran a staff wellbeing survey in May, where we asked colleagues to feed back on their experiences of working for the Council over the last five months. In total, 975 members of staff, including agency staff, responded to the survey, representing a total turnout of 55.7% of the workforce, which is a strong turnout compared to similar surveys in other London local authorities.

3.12 Key findings include:

- Over 93% of our staff are working from home most of the time, with only 3% stating that they do not work from home either because they are in the office or perform roles in the community
- Staff have a range of caring responsibilities, including for children, partner/spouse, neighbours, extended family, as volunteers, as well as caring for themselves.
- Over 75% of respondents noted that they had a suitable place to work from home and over 77% have the technology they need to work effectively from home, which is a significant accomplishment at this stage in the rollout of the IT transformation programme.
- Over 86% of respondents are proud of their work to support the COVID-19 response and 94% of respondents would speak positively about the work the Council is doing to friends and family.
- 48% of staff agreed that their home/work life balance has improved overall. Staff did also highlighted concerns about screen time going up, and mental health and wellbeing concerns, which will be addressed through our HR wellbeing and development offer.
- There was a low take-up of Council support services, such as our Occupational Health Service and our Employee Assistance Programme, despite broad awareness of this service provision.
- In terms of training opportunities, staff expressed an interest in wellbeing and resilience. However, there was mixed interest from Managers to take-up training.

3.13 The longer-term changes that staff would like to see after the COVID-19 crisis has ended include:

- Ongoing engagement with staff through regular communications and surveys.
- Maintaining home working opportunities and promote flexible, remote and agile working for all.
- More interdisciplinary working across teams.
- More volunteering opportunities.

- More virtual meetings.

3.14 In response to the findings of the staff survey, a Staff Survey Working Group has been established with representation from all service areas to develop an action plan and take forward key recommendations. Departments have been encouraged to conduct local surveys as needed to gain further local intelligence and a further Council wide staff survey will be taken forward at the end of the year.

3.15 Thanking our staff and volunteers

The Council recognises that we have only been able to respond effectively to the many challenges of the COVID-19 crisis through the collective contribution of our staff and the enthusiastic turnout in support from volunteers across the borough.

3.16 We are therefore taking the opportunity to thank all staff, both those who we have redeployed or that have provided one-off support to deliver key COVID-19 programmes and workstreams, as well as those in their business as usual roles who have also made a vital contribution in keeping services running and maintaining performance standards.

3.17 We are recognising the contributions of staff through:

- Joint certificate and thank you letter from the Chief Executive and the Mayor to members of staff deployed as part of the C-19 response workstreams;
- Voucher reward scheme to recognise the contribution of deployed staff;
- Identification of 5-10 exceptional members of staff to be put forward for the Queen's Garden Party
- Nomination of 2 exceptional members of staff to be put forward for the Queen's C-19 national honours

3.18 We are recognising the contribution of all volunteers who registered and those who were assigned to provide additional support through:

- Joint certificate and thank you letter from the Chief Executive, Executive Portfolio Holder for Care and Health and Madam Mayor to the 1082 deployed volunteers;
- Joint certificate and thank you letter from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Care and Health and Madam Mayor to the COVID-19 Mutual Aid groups and other voluntary organisations that assisted Bromley residents;
- Letter of thanks from the Director of Social Care and Madam Mayor to the 3,500 or so volunteers not deployed;
- Thank you note from the Leader and Chief Executive to members of staff as and when through the CEO regular email to staff.
- Seven Bromley-based charities/organisations to receive formal letters/certificates from the Lord Lieutenant;
- One Bromley based organisation identified by Madam Mayor to be put forward for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS).

Transformation Programme 2019 - 2023

3.19 In the second year of the four year transformation programme, the Transformation Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, has continued to meet regularly to scrutinise the development of transformation proposals across the six workstreams in order to help reduce the Council's emerging budget gap over the next four years:

- 1.Housing Planning and Regeneration
- 2.Children's Services and Education
- 3.Adult Social Care
- 4.Environment and Public Protection

- 5. Professional Services
- 6. Workplace Modernisation

3.20 Where a policy decision is required, the six Transformation Boards are in the process of submitting their transformation savings proposals for 2021/22 to the relevant PDS Committees and to the Executive. The decisions on these proposals will then inform the overall budget setting process for 2021/22.

3.21 Key priorities for the next 6 months

1. Effective delivery of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Delivering the key organisational efficiencies and transformations as part of the Transforming Bromley agenda
3. Close financial monitoring of the Council's budget and the cost of the COVID-19 crisis to the Council, as well as the extent to which the Government funds the net cost to the Council
4. Continuing to progress the delivery of affordable housing units as outlined in the Housing Strategy 2019 – 2029
5. Delivery of the key corporate priorities of the Council
6. Overseeing the roll out and deployment of new IT equipment to support staff working from home
7. Baselineing and review of the office accommodation needs of staff
8. Effective health and social care partnership working through the One Bromley Executive Group.