

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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

Date: 25 March 2024

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

Title: SCRUTINY OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Chief Officer: Ade Adetosoye CBE, 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 September 2023, I can provide the following updates:

- Updates on key organisational priorities for 2023/24.
- Council achievements in 2023/24.
- Strategic priorities for 2024/25.
- Priorities for the next six months.

4. Updates on Key Organisational Priorities for 2023/24

Financial Management

- 4.1 The 2024/25 Council Tax Report to Executive on 26 February 2024 identified a balanced budget in 2024/25 and a budget gap of £16.6 million in 2025/26, rising to £34.3 million in 2026/27 and £38.7 million per annum by 2027/28.
- 4.2 The Council continues to face increasing challenges to manage a statutory balanced budget. This includes the need to address the ongoing Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding deficits, the medium-term risk of depletion of Reserves and the resultant impact, funding the future Capital Programme and progressing to the next steps for the Transformation Programme.
- 4.3 In response, the Council will continue its prudent financial management, ensuring the Council 'spends within its means' in considering not just next year's budget but the impact on future years.
- 4.4 The Senior Leadership Team and I keep a close focus on the monitoring of the Council's budget at meetings of Chief Officer's Executive (COE) and Budget Challenges Sessions. Equally, fortnightly meetings of Transformation Board continue to monitor delivery against agreed savings, alongside identifying other opportunities to generate savings and cost efficiencies.

Delivery of Transforming Bromley 2019 – 2023

- 4.5 In 2019 I launched the 'Transforming Bromley Roadmap', which took a whole Council approach in responding to the significant funding pressures over the last four years.
- 4.6 Since its launch, the Transforming Bromley Programme has enabled us to adapt, embrace and thrive in a rapidly changing context. Over the course of this time, we have addressed expected and unforeseen challenges, seized opportunities and improved performance aligned to our core purpose and values. In 2024/25 the full year effect of the Phase Three Transformation Savings combined with new changes totals £4.9 million, which will increase to £6.9 million per annum in 2027/28.
- 4.7 Several Transformation programmes and projects have been successfully developed and delivered and have resulted in a balanced budget delivered through savings, mitigations of growth and Transformation.
- 4.8 I take this opportunity to highlight a few of the achievements we have made against our six key workstreams:

1. Professional Services
 - Established a new Corporate Leadership Team, with five operational Directors to lead the delivery of two front line Departments (People and Place) and three Corporate Directors to mobilise a Chief Executive's Department delivering Professional Services alongside a new Assistant Director of Corporate Transformation.
 - Management oversight was improved with the implementation of a new HR and Finance Monitoring System.
 - Invested in a new Social Care Casework Management System to replace the existing CareFirst Database, delivering an integrated system for both Children's and Adult Social Care.
 - Achieved income through Treasury Management to help offset the impact of inflation and protect key Services.
2. Workplace Modernisation
 - Expedited the IT Strategy ensuring a COVID-compliant laptop rollout.
 - Upgraded our new SharePoint site to support smarter working.
 - Reviewed and realigned our HR policies and procedures to support our culture change.
 - Purchased Churchill Court, our new Council Hub.
3. Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration
 - Re-opened the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to enable the Council to hold housing stock.
 - Acquired and/ or developed over 600 properties through various schemes.
 - Delivered a significant Operational Property Review to review all of the Council's assets, leading to an evidenced Capital Programme to meet the needs of the organisation in the short, medium, and long term.
4. Children's Services and Education
 - Improved the Council's early intervention referral and assessment pathway by launching the Children and Families Hub.
 - Joined a Commissioning Alliance with other local authorities across London.
 - Carried out reviews of SEN Transport Services and SEN Placements to reduce costs and meet the needs of our children and young people.
5. Adult Social Care
 - Launched the Adult Social Care Roadmap to Excellence to underline and direct our improvement journey.
 - Launched our 'Strengths and Outcomes-Based Practice Framework' that builds on the strengths of service users to meet their needs.
 - Significantly improved partnership and collaboration with Health Partners.
6. Environment and Community Services
 - Delivered a number of key initiatives as part of our work to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2027.
 - Began procuring green energy at no additional cost to the Council.
 - Launched the Platinum Jubilee Park Fund, committing £1 million to contribute towards community led projects that improve our green spaces.

Transforming Bromley 2024 – 2028

- 4.9 The Transforming Bromley Programme has now been refreshed for the next four years 2024 – 2028 and sets out how we intend to improve our capabilities and the way we use our resources to help deliver our Corporate Plan's vision and ambitions.

- 4.10 As over the last four years, Transforming Bromley will develop and deliver savings, efficiency and transformation change programmes. It will continue to foster a culture of innovation, embracing new ways of working and make optimal use of resources, including financial, human and technological assets. The Programme will also encourage an inclusive and integrated approach that makes best use of people, systems and processes. Part of this will include investment in our staff, buildings and technology, encouraging modern working practices and developing the skills, culture and behaviours required to make change possible.
- 4.11 Transformation proposals will work within cross cutting themes, including;
- Our business efficiency (to include AI/Digitalisation, better use of Technology);
 - Managing rising demand differently;
 - Changing how we fund and provide services;
 - Increasing our income and commercial models;
 - Reduction or cessation of services;
 - Re/commissioning and procurement opportunities;
 - Realignment of services
 - Invest to save opportunities to provide future savings in the Council's revenue budget;
 - Continuing to maximise Treasury Management income.
- 4.12 In order to deliver the next phase of Transforming Bromley 2024-28 the council will reinstate programme management capacity to develop and implement programmes that will deliver cashable savings and further growth mitigation. The Hub Programme Management Office will work with satellite spoke Project Management Officers (PMOs) to develop and implement programmes. The Hub will define the policy and procedures, while the local satellite PMOs will develop and implement the projects.

Making Bromley Even Better

- 4.13 Now in the third year since launching the Corporate Strategy, progress updates against our five key ambitions include:
1. For children and young people to grow up, thrive and have the best life changes in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
 - The recent Ofsted inspection confirmed Bromley's Children's Services as 'Outstanding' in all areas of social work.
 - Several playground improvement projects have been delivered this year at sites including Betts Park and Chislehurst Recreation Ground.
 - Bromley's rate of First-Time Entrants (FTE) has reduced annually by 7% and is 35% lower than the average for London (the latest comparator data available is for 2022 – 2023). This has been supported by the further extension of prevention support for children on the cusp of offending by the Youth Justice Service and includes programmes such as 'Turnaround' and 'Engage'.
 - Allocated £200k from the People and Skills allocations of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to increase the number of young people aged 18 – 25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to engage in job searing and who gain employment following support.
 2. For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence, and making choices.

- 74% of Adult Social Care Service Users are supported in the community (2,569 of 3,471 at the end of September 2023).
 - The Innovation Fund has been used to support the establishment of a Wellbeing Café in the Crays. Proposals to develop more day activities are included in the current round of Innovation Fund bids.
 - Piloted technology such as 'OwnFone' to support patients discharged from hospital. The initiative aims to increase social interaction, confidence when living independently, and is supporting prevention work in the community.
 - Several Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund projects are supporting work to tackle loneliness, with opportunities for people to become more involved in their local green space and make connections with other volunteers through projects at Beckenham Green, Richmal Crompton Fields and Winsford Gardens.
 - Held events for 'Silver Sunday' and 'Befriending Week' in November 2023 to raise awareness, and support groups at risk of and experiencing loneliness.
3. For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.
- Launched the Bromley Business Growth initiative in December 2023 to provide free advice and assistance to Bromley's businesses, including two new local support services available via the Council's Partners at Goldsmiths, University of London and Newable.
 - Launched Good Works Bromley Exchange that bring a range of Partners to support people into employment through Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) and Work Skill Programmes, including those with additional needs.
 - Increases full-fibre broadband coverage across the borough from only 1% in May 2020 (prior to the MOU and Openreach rollout) to over 46% in November 2023.
 - Completed the restoration of the Crystal Palace Subway in November 2023.
 - Produced Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide further guidance on Planning for Orpington and Bromley Town Centre.
 - Took forward a programme of improvement works across the borough's libraries, including the refurbishment of St Paul's Cray Library and Community Centre.
 - As part of the Night Time Enterprise Zone, the Council held a number of events attracting thousands of visitors.
4. For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean, and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
- Completed Phase One of Affordable Housing Developments, with additional developments in progress (e.g., York Rise and West Wickham).
 - Approximately 327 units have been acquired through the Housing Acquisition Schemes, with a further 182 planned through the Meadowship Homes Phase Two Scheme.
 - Green Flag Awards were achieved at seven of the borough's directly managed open spaces.
 - Through the Council's Treemendous Programme, 1,510 trees were planted in 2022/23. The Council is also on track to exceed its targets for 2023/24, with over 1,200 trees planted to date.
 - Begun the process of rolling out an electric vehicle gully charging project across the borough as a paid for service, at no cost to the Council.
 - Begun plans to redevelop both the Walnuts and West Wickham Leisure Centre to modern standards and enhance the leisure facilities available to

- residents within the borough.
- Provided residents with the best options to travel as suits their requirements, which has included investment of new zebra crossings.
5. To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
- Purchased the Council's new and modern Office building, Churchill Court.
 - Achieved a balanced budget in 2024/25 and continued with our Transformation Programme to develop and deliver savings, efficiency, and transformation change programmes.
 - Adult Social Care concluded the first phase of work with the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to deliver efficiencies both in terms of cost and capacity.
 - Maximised Treasury Management income.

Accommodation Move Progress

- 4.14 With the successful acquisition of the Churchill court site at the end of July 2023, the priority has been to ensure the site is fit for purpose and can accommodate our staff and Council Chambers.
- 4.15 Construction work is now fully underway across eleven floors of the building and, following this, internal fit out works will commence and include the construction of a main reception area for residents and other visitors to use, a range of meeting rooms and a Council Chamber.
- 4.16 The expectation is that we will be in a position to fully vacate the current Civic Centre by the end of September 2024.
- 4.17 To support staff on this journey, I am pleased that we will have another all-staff conference on Wednesday 13 March.

The Constitution

- 4.18 The Constitution Working Group have now approved a new structure for the Council's Constitution that has been simplified and streamlined for ease of access.
- 4.19 Where relevant, the document has been updated and duplicate material removed, with no changes to the substance of the content made at this stage.
- 4.20 Further reviews are expected, with particular focus on the Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules, the Key Decisions Thresholds, the Local Planning Protocol and Code of Conduct, and Outside Bodies. Before any changes are introduced, the appropriate Members and Officers will be properly consulted.

Legislative Changes

Election Preparations

- 4.21 Major changes were announced in 2022 through the Elections Act. The first tranche of changes included the introduction of photo ID at polling stations, the issue of a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) to eligible residents without valid photo ID, and new accessibility requirements.

- 4.22 The second tranche of changes, which comes into force in advance of the May 2024 elections, includes new measures relating to Absent Voting, Overseas Electors, European (EU) Citizens Voting and Candidacy Rights, and other election related changes such as postal vote handling and the voting system at certain elections.
- 4.23 The Electoral Team are well underway with preparations, but it is envisaged that the implementation of the new measures will substantially increase the work of staff.
- 4.24 A 'new burdens' agreement between the Government and Local Government to fully fund additional burdens has been promised, however, as this will be an ongoing pressure, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)/ Returning Officer (RO) may require additional resources from the Council, unless the Government fully funds the ongoing costs associated with these new measures.

Procurement Pipeline

- 4.25 The Procurement Act 2023 requires contracting authorities to publish an annual Procurement Pipeline Notice which must be published at the beginning of each financial year. The Notice must provide specific detail on all planned procurements with an estimated whole life value of £2 million and above, including detail on what each procurement is, when it will commence and when it will be awarded. Each published Notice must cover an 18-month period, and in year updates may be required.
- 4.26 The Procurement Bill is expected to go live this year, so it is assumed the first formal Procurement Pipeline Notice will need to be published in April 2025 for the period April 2025 to September 2026.
- 4.27 The Corporate Procurement Team are in the process of developing a Procurement Pipeline that will capture information on planned procurements for all value contracts with a whole life value of £25k or higher, which goes beyond the statutory requirements.
- 4.28 This will support meaningful forward planning for all procurements, including better resource planning, phasing of projects and strategic category management where appropriate.

Adult Social Care Reforms

- 4.29 In December 2021, the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper 'People at the Heart of Care' set out a 10-year Vision for how the government will transform support and care in England.
- 4.30 Despite much of the reforms now being delayed, the Council has continued with a programme of work that has included maximising opportunities to utilise technology and digitalisation and has developed an Adult Social Care Digital Transformation Strategy 2024 to 2034 that considers the improvements in digital capabilities, connectivity, and infrastructure, in relation to the care solutions offered and delivered for residents, providing more engagement choice and support efficient ways of working.
- 4.31 Also, a five-year Adult Social Care Strategy has been developed, which notes how the Council will respond to demand and cost pressures in the borough, provide good quality and safe care and support to residents, service users and carers, and the transformational work necessary to help achieve the key objectives.

Internal Audit Standards

- 4.32 In January 2024, the Global Institute of Internal Auditors released new internal auditing professional standards, with an implementation date of January 2025. These new standards represent some significant changes from the previous standards, with the overall aim to strengthen and enhance the profession and practices of internal audit.
- 4.33 Will have new audit standards to be introduced next January, will need to rework processes, carry out a gap analysis and training, will report changes to a future meeting of COE. Put additional responsibilities on senior management and Audit Committee. Waiting to see if CIPFA will iron out any difficulties for the public sector.
- 4.34 During the course of this year, the Audit Team will undertake a gap analysis against the new standards as a whole and identify actions needed to be compliant.
- 4.35 One of the key changes to the Standards concerns the governance of internal audit, with specific 'essential conditions' (expectations) for both senior management (COE) and Audit and Risk Management Committee.
- 4.36 For senior management (COE), the conditions largely relate to ensuring that the role of internal audit is fully discussed, agreed and understood and that Internal Audit is supported to operate independently and effectively throughout the organisation.
- 4.37 Some of the new governance requirements relating to Audit and Risk Management Committee are, however, problematic for the public sector and local government. In response, CIPFA are assessing whether they need to provide additional interpretations for the public sector and a decision on this is expected shortly.

Inspection Readiness

- 4.38 At the start of this year, Ofsted confirmed that children in the borough receive 'exceptionally strong Services' and confirmed Bromley's Children Services as outstanding in all areas, which is the highest rating Ofsted can give, and makes the Service one of the very best in the country.
- 4.39 The Council and Partners will continue to work hard for our children and young people and build on key learning from inspection feedback, which will also help inform preparations for the inspection of our Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection.
- 4.40 Part of our continued transformational work includes the recently launched 'EMBRACE' Service to provide bespoke care for our most traumatised and vulnerable young people, allowing them the opportunity to reach their full potential within a family environment and to live within a family home until they are 18 years old.

Youth Justice Service (YJS)

- 4.41 Bromley YJS partnership is currently in line for inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, which is anticipated between now and the end of September.
- 4.42 In preparation, the Service continues to maintain its position of continual service

improvement that includes strategic development, and at the end of last year the Service drafted its Reducing Reoffending Strategy 2023 – 2026. The aim of the Strategy is to support the wider partnership in planning how to meet changing needs with a view to keeping reoffending rates in Bromley low.

- 4.43 As for HMIPs consultation on a new inspection framework, engagement has taken place with the sector, and it is anticipated that the new framework will commence in October this year.

Adult Services

- 4.44 Adult Services have been working through identified areas for attention following an appraisal of the Service that is helpfully informing inspection readiness preparations. Key work for review has included that in relation to hospital discharge arrangements, support to carers, use of technology and safeguarding practice.
- 4.45 In addition to this, a new Principal Social Worker has been recruited, who has been leading on a number of things, as well as supporting inspection preparedness.
- 4.46 Alongside Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance preparedness, the Adults Directorate has also continued its preparations for inspection of its Adult Education and Shared Lives Services, which are both expected imminently.

Partnership Working

Safer Bromley Partnership

- 4.47 The Safer Bromley Partnership brings together statutory agencies, Bromley Council, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, South East London Integrated Care Board and National Probation Service, commissioned Services and community and voluntary representatives.
- 4.48 The Partnership is in the process of developing its new Community Safety Strategy for 2024 to 2027, which is being formulated based on the findings of the Annual Strategic Assessment and the following three priorities:
- Prevention: Being Stronger Together.
 - People: Protecting People.
 - Places: Resilient Communities.
- 4.49 This is an important document for the work of the Partnership over the course of the next few years, and Partners are in the process of reviewing feedback following a consultation phase that ended on Thursday 29 February.
- 4.50 The strength of partnership has continued to go from strength to strength and has been identified and noted by the chair of the Safer Neighbourhood Board, Sharon Baldwin, as ‘an excellent example of partnership working, something not necessarily shared by other boroughs. This provided the opportunity to make collaborative decisions that would directly and positively impact on local communities’¹.
- 4.51 In this way, the Partnership will continue to respond to strategic and operational priorities, focusing particularly on additional work with Education to help children and young people to stay safe and holding an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) conference on 11 March to understand concerns on the issue and to work on local solutions to

¹ [Safer Bromley Partnership Board Minutes](#), 6 December 2023, 6.

prevent and resolve ASB.

Integrated Care System (ICS)

- 4.52 The Council continues to work with South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) to explore further opportunities for local integration of Health and Social Care that includes the pooling of resources across the locality if it enables better opportunities for value for money, economies of scale, reduce duplication and streamline processes. As ever Bromley's Local Care Partnership maintains oversight of decisions to join up and or integrate Services, ensuring the best outcomes for Bromley residents.
- 4.53 Some developments to deliver integrated Health and Care Services across care pathways has included a review of the discharge pathway, which has led to the Hospital Social Work Team managing all out-of-borough hospital discharges and enhanced care discharges.
- 4.54 Together with Partners, the Council developed the Bromley Carers Plan, which was agreed by Executive in the latter part of last year, and is a joint plan agreed across the Council and SEL ICB that sets out what advice, guidance and support is available to unpaid carers in the borough and how this offer to carers will be developed further over the next two years.
- 4.55 Our Adult Social Care Strategy 2023 – 2028 and Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024 – 2029 have also been developed in Partnership. The latter cross-references with our Making Bromley Even Better 2021 – 2031 and existing current and relevant Council strategies, such as the Tackling Loneliness Strategy 2022 – 2026, and aligns with the Bromley Local Care Partnership Five-Year Strategy and South East London Integrated Care Service Strategy.
- 4.56 The Bromley Homeless Health project is also a collaboration between the Council, NHS and the voluntary and community sector to provide a health and wellbeing clinic for Bromley's homeless community. This joint initiative sponsored by Public Health and funded by the local Integrated Care Board (ICB) is working with the homeless community to facilitate access to mainstream Services.
- 4.57 In terms of future work, a new Mental Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is being commissioned and this will inform the development of a new strategy to take effect from next year. Also, the new joint Adult Mental Health Recovery and Rehabilitation Support at Home Service will commence in October this year.

Community Groups

- 4.58 Key achievements have been made to deliver the ambitions of the Open Space Strategy over the course of the last year, much of which has been possible through the partnerships created with community groups, including our Friends of Parks, who in many cases have been able to raise additional funds to support the improvement of their local green spaces.
- 4.59 As an example, the Friends of Cator Park and Alexandra Recreation Ground have fund raised to plant a Tiny Forest in Cator Park, planting a mix of native trees in a small area to replicate the natural processes of forest regeneration.
- 4.60 Additionally, Green Flag Awards have been achieved at seven of the borough's directly managed open spaces, with Idverde aiming to achieve this award at another

four sites by next year, with the support of the local Friends Groups.

Progress to Achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2027

- 4.61 The Council's Net Zero Action Plan is in its fourth year of implementation, and action to reduce emissions is continuing to demonstrate a positive impact with the Council's net zero emissions for Year Four (2022/23), in line with previous years assessment and reporting, totalling 3,133 tonnes² CO₂e. This is a 14% reduction on Year Three (2021/22) and a 56% reduction on the baseline year of 2018/19.
- 4.62 Key focuses for the Council to continue to reduce its direct emissions include moving towards low carbon energy sources for heating where possible as part of work related to the Operational Property Review, completing the final phase of the LED streetlight conversion, working with the Greater London Authority (GLA) on a pan-London renewable PPA procurement option for 2025, which would allow all London boroughs to access renewable energy and achieve zero emissions on electricity use, continuing the move towards a paperless Office and more electronic storage, and exploring options such as the expansion of woodlands within the borough as part of carbon offsetting initiatives.

Armed Forces Covenant

- 4.63 The Council received the Bronze Award last month (February 2024) from the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which makes Bromley one of only twelve local authorities to achieve this in recognition of the Council's commitment to Bromley's armed forces community.
- 4.64 The logos are now proudly displayed on the Council's website along with information pages signposting the armed forces communities towards support and advice.
- 4.65 To continue to meet our Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) commitments, the Culture Team have produced an Action Plan that identifies workstreams and lead Officers responsible for the implementation and monitoring of progress against each key area, which will report into the newly established Working Group.
- 4.66 An expression of interest is in the process of being made for the Silver Award.

Housing Provision

- 4.67 A priority for the council is increasing the supply of accommodation, which is reflected in our Housing Transformation Plan.
- 4.68 Going into 2024/25, five schemes have been approved that will deliver approximately 109 affordable housing units at York Rise, Burnt Ash, Anerley, Bushell Way and West Wickham.
- 4.69 A further two schemes to the Capital Programme, Bromley North and Beckenham Car park, were approved in the latter part of last year, which are expected to provide a further 78 social housing units one complete.
- 4.70 In addition to our housing development schemes, approximately 327 units have been acquired through the housing acquisition schemes, with a further 182 planned through the Meadowship Homes Phase Two Scheme. Combining all schemes, this total 691 new units.

- 4.71 Feasibility works for developments at the current Bellegrove site, as well as further scoping exercises for sites at Manorfields and Poverest are also underway.

Local London

- 4.72 The Council joined Local London and signed the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) for the Local London SRP last year.
- 4.73 A number of projects have been delivered over the course of the last year, which has only been possible since joining the SRP. This has included securing SIF funding to enable the Council to deploy new dark fibre and increase connectivity across the borough, and the launch of the London E-Business Support Programme that Bromley businesses now have access to.
- 4.74 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) grant funding has also been secured, which will be used in the delivery of employment and skills projects in Bromley. The Bromley People and Skills SPF Programme consists of three strands; the Good Work Bromley Exchange, Supporting Care Leavers into employment and SEND Programme.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024 to 2029

- 4.75 The new Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been approved, which contains three priority areas:
- Improving Health and Wellbeing of Young People (to include obesity, youth violence, adolescent mental health).
 - Improving Health and Wellbeing of Adults (to include obesity, diabetes, dementia, mental health, substance misuse).
 - Disease Prevention and Helping People to Stay Well (linking with the South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) prevention priority and achieving this through vital five work).
- 4.76 Action plans are in development with the support of local Partners, including South East London Integrated Care System (SEL ICS), SEL ICB, One Bromley, Healthwatch Bromley, Community Links Bromley, Bromley Safeguarding Adults Board and Bromley Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and will help monitoring progress against key priorities.

Supporting Our Staff

Digital Transformation

- 4.77 As part of the Council's Digital Transformation Programme, telephony functions migrated from the on-premises Skype for Business 2015 to a cloud-hosted Microsoft Teams with direct routing solution, which removes the Council's dependency on on-premises systems.
- 4.78 The cloud provides many benefits to the Council, which includes higher degrees of automation, culminating in the quicker provision of the latest features and security solutions.
- 4.79 The project has been a major move for the Council and closely aligns to the objectives of the IT Strategy around scalability, cost savings, enhanced reliability and availability, and flexibility and agility.

Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

- 4.80 NHS Health Checks were offered to all eligible staff and have now successfully completed. The results show that this was a worthwhile intervention in promoting staff health and wellbeing, with 242 members of staff attending.
- 4.81 Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 90% of those who completed a satisfaction survey reporting they would recommend the Staff NHS Health Check to Colleagues.
- 4.82 Public Health have continued to work with HR and the Learning and Development Team to support the health and wellbeing of staff, which currently includes support with weight management.
- 4.83 Staff, and residents, also have access to 'Lower my Drinking' which is a new addition to Bromley's Drug and Alcohol Support commissioned by the Council, which aims to help individuals identify the risks associated with their level of drinking alcohol and what actions can be taken to help stay in control.
- 4.84 Additionally, our Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provide health screening, ill-health referrals, general medical advice, confidential counselling and practical expert advice on a variety of personal, family and workplace issues. Both Services have undergone comprehensive reviews that have now concluded, and new contracts are expected to commence from 1 April.

Workforce Development Strategy

- 4.85 A new Workforce Development Strategy is currently in development and will neatly align to our refreshed Transforming Bromley Programme to further develop and transform the workforce to be ready to address new and future challenges by ensuring that staff can develop the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours required to support the type of change required.

Disability Confident Scheme

- 4.86 A key objective is to elevate the Council's commitment to disability inclusion from Level One to Level Two under the Disability Confident Scheme. The Scheme supports employers to challenge attitudes, increase understanding, and remove barriers to disability, ensuring that those with disabilities or long-term health conditions are able to fulfil their potential.
- 4.87 To achieve Level Two, a comprehensive gap analysis and assessment is currently underway, which involves evaluating our current practices, policies, and support mechanisms to identify areas where improvements are needed.

Pay Award and Merited Rewards

- 4.88 The Council adopted local terms and conditions of employment in November 2012 and since then the annual pay award has been set as part of the annual Council Budget/ Council Tax by Members/ Councillors, following consultations with staff and their representatives and the public.
- 4.89 Despite ongoing pressure on the Council's finances, Full Council agreed a 3% pay increase across the board, the removal of the equivalent of spinal points nine to eleven (affecting BR3 grade) with assimilation to equivalent of spinal point twelve

(BR4), and an increase to the merit reward pot by 3% in 2024/25, which is used to recognise the exceptional performances of staff. As in previous years, staff will receive the payments in their April pay.

4.90 My thanks to Members for the continued recognition of staff and the work they do in the borough.

5. Council Achievements in 2023

5.1 As a Council we received national recognition for a number of projects and innovations in 2023. Key accolades include:

- Received the Gold Award in the 'Efficiency and Effectiveness' category in the national iESA Transformation Awards.
- Shortlisted for 'Use of Data Insight' in the Public Sector Transformation Awards.
- Our Living in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum (Change for Care Leavers) won Coram British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) 'Young Persons Voice' first prize at their annual Amplify Event organised by the National Children in Care Council (A National Voice) for ensuring the voices of young people are heard.
- The Early Help Service came 'Runners Up' for Early Help Services in the Children and Young People Awards 2023.
- Our Tackling Loneliness poster was chosen for exhibition at The Campaign to End Loneliness International Conference, with Bromley being the only local authority recognised in this way.
- The Council's 'Loneliness Workshop' won in the 'Princess Royal Training Awards'.
- Won the prestigious national Affordable Housing Award for Homeless Project of the Year 2023. This award recognises projects that deliver exceptional work with homeless clients, and the remarkable individuals who lead by example.
- The Burnt Ash (Zed Pod) Housing Scheme received an 'Energy Efficiency Award' in the summer.
- The borough's libraries were recognised for issuing over one million books last year, more than any other London Borough.
- Local Land Chargers were 'Runners Up' for 'Team of the Year' in the Land Data Local Land Charges Awards.
- Nine parks and green spaces in the borough were winners of the 'Green Flag' Award Scheme' this year.
- Came first place across all London Boroughs for household recycling (Defra statistics for 2021/22, released April 2023).
- Five Park Mark Awards were renewed in car parks across the borough with Bromley retaining this standard across all its car parks.
- Awarded the highest number of STARS points across London in a borough as a percentage of the possible maximum for a borough, signifying the best school's engagement by a London borough.
- The Fraud Team won 'Excellence' in the Institute of Revenues Ratings and Valuation category 'Protecting the Public Purse'.
- The Local Land Charges Team have been shortlisted in the best performing NLIS Level 2 Local Land Charges Department at the Land Data Local Land Charges Awards 2023.

5.2 We also saw a number of staff recognised for their individual contributions and achievements to public service. This included:

- Charmaine Malcolm, our Principle Social Worker, scooped first prize in the 'National Leader Award' by Front Line.
- Of our Bromley Adult Care Award winners, five received acclaim in the London Great British Care Awards 2023:
 - The Home Care Award (Highly Commended) – Kellie Mitchell, Home Instead Bromley, Chislehurst and Orpington.
 - The Supported Living Team Award (Winner) – Bromley Active Team, Creative Support.
 - The Frontline Leader Award (Winner) – Emma Smith, Choice Support.
 - The Housing with Care Award (Highly Commended) – Opeyemi Ovinsan, Achieve Together.
 - The Care Newcomer Award (Winner) – Elle Sena, Chislehurst Healthcare.
 - Both Bromley Active and Emma Smith will be part of the National Finals in Birmingham this year.
- Tracey Wilson was shortlisted in the 2023 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) national awards in the 'Outstanding Individual Contribution' category in support of our work for Ukraine locally.
- Graeme Preston, Trading Standards Manager, was shortlisted for the London Trading Standards Manager of the Year Award.
- Julie Langman, Principal Trading Standards Enforcement Officer, was nominated in the London Trading Standards Investigator of the Year category.
- Helen Stickling was recognised in Pro Landscaper's 30 under 30.

5.3 We have also started 2024 strong, with equally positive recognition in the following:

- The Ofsted inspection of Bromley's Children Services concluded that children in the borough receive "exceptionally strong services", with an outstanding rating in all categories.
- Bromley was again recognised as London's top recycling borough for a consecutive year, with almost half (48.7%) of household waste being recycled (Defra statistics for 2022/23, released January 2024).
- Our Loneliness work received the 'Gold Award' in the 'Community and Customer Focus' category at the iESE Public Sector Awards 2024.
- The Bromley Homelessness Health Project collected the 'Silver Award' in the 'Working Together' category at the iESE Public Sector Awards 2024.

6. **Strategic Priorities for 2024/25**

6.1 The following is a snapshot of some of the key deliverables across the Council's Departments for this financial year.

Finance

6.2 The Department will continue to support work to deliver a balanced budget and long-term financial planning to understand how to deal with the challenges the Council faces and respond to any early indications where action is required.

6.3 As an enabler, the Department's priorities go beyond financial planning and budget monitoring and will continue to include support to key Departmental and Corporate Projects and Programmes including Housing initiatives, the Operational Property Review (OPR), Disposals, the Accommodation Move and Transformation.

- 6.4 Alongside this, new and innovative opportunities to do things differently and more efficiently will be explored and will include reviewing how the Council manages Capital spend, considering alternative approaches such as borrowing to support Housing projects and generating opportunities for income through Treasury Management.

Human Resources (HR), Customer Services and Public Affairs

- 6.5 Succession planning, upskilling the workforce and managing critical posts are just some of the priorities HR Colleagues are focusing on as part of recruitment and retention initiatives. This work will be further supported through the maximisation of the Apprenticeship Levy to both upskill staff and recruit more apprenticeship posts.
- 6.6 The Department will also continue to facilitate the delivery of wider Council priorities and objectives, which includes that related to our Accommodation Move, progressing the next phase of the CRM Website upgrades, enhancing system efficiencies through the HR/ Payroll System and launching the new Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in April.

Corporate Services and Governance

- 6.7 Corporate Services will continue to optimise digitalisation where appropriate to realise efficiencies in Service delivery and achieve projected savings.
- 6.8 Important key developments across IT includes work to upgrade the Council's IT infrastructure, namely the migration of business applications to Microsoft Azure Cloud Data Centres, which will provide many benefits to the Council such as higher degrees of automation, quicker provision of the latest features and security solutions.
- 6.9 Aligning these key developments will be the new Digital and IT Strategy, which will set out the vision of our Services for the future and areas for delivery including the replacement of Windows 10 as it reaches end of support in 2025.
- 6.10 Other key priorities for the Service include supporting the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) roll out and leading on a culture of compliance across the Council.

Children, Education and Families

- 6.11 Always seeking to continually improve our excellent Services, the Children, Education and Families Department will look to further grow and improve its 'outstanding' Services, using the findings of the recent Ofsted inspection.
- 6.12 Learning from the recent Ofsted Inspection will also serve to benefit the Department in its preparations for inspection of the Council's Youth Justice Service, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Adult Education.
- 6.13 The Department will also take forward a number of Transformation projects with the aim of improving outcomes for children and young people, complete a restructure of Children's Services and deliver a new Special School in Chislehurst later this year.

Adult Services

- 6.14 Key priorities in Adult Social Care this year will expand on the already fantastic work undertaken across the Service. Notably, preparations for the inspection of Adult Services.

- 6.15 The Department will also seek to deliver key work to fulfil the priorities and promises of strategic documents published last year, which includes the Adult Social Care Strategy 2023 – 2028 and the implementation of the Learning and Development Strategy.
- 6.16 As ever, partnership work across the System is key, and further opportunities to deliver Services more efficiently will be considered, which includes continued work with the ICB to roll out community hubs.

Public Health

- 6.17 Following the publication of a number of key strategies for the Department last year that includes the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Officers will be working hard to ensure that outcomes and priorities are delivered.
- 6.18 The Department will also publish a number of high-level plans and strategies this year that includes the Suicide Prevention Plan, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Chapters of Brain Health, Cancer and Morbidity and Mortality in Bromley, finalisation of the Alcohol Needs Assessment and Homeless Needs Assessment and update of the Children and Young People JSNA.
- 6.19 In addition to strategy development and setting the vision for future years, the Department will also focus on optimising grant allocations, transform and redesign prevention pathways in line with the NHS, and develop, modernise and expand key Services across areas including weight management, smoking cessation and sexual health.
- 6.20 Partnership working remains key to the success of initiatives, and the Department will continue to develop these relationships to make lasting change in our communities, as an example, through the Combatting Drugs Partnership.

Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration

- 6.21 The Department will progress further with the Council's Operational Property Review and Disposals Programme, which includes the sale of the Civic Centre.
- 6.22 Key work will also continue around the Council's Accommodation Move that includes the review of existing operational contracts and the development of a Lettings Strategy for Churchill Court.
- 6.23 A number of strategies are in the process of being developed to inform the delivery and direction of future work including the new Homelessness Strategy, Leisure Strategy, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and Regeneration Strategy, sign-off of the Council's Allocation Scheme and Housing Assistance Policy, as well as producing a first draft of the new Bromley Local Plan.
- 6.24 Other key deliverables include taking forward construction on West Wickham and York Rise housing schemes and new housing developments at Bromley North, Beckenham and Bellegrove. Also, progressing the next stage of the Leisure refurbishment design schemes for West Wickham and Walnuts Leisure Centres.

Environment and Public Protection

- 6.25 Alongside maintaining the excellent work of Environmental Services, the Department will also look to the work it must do to plan and protect the borough's environment, to fulfil our Corporate Strategies vision for Bromley to be safe, clean, green, and

sustainable, great for today and for the future.

- 6.26 Key pieces of work will include the delivery of Highway Safety Scheme improvements across the borough, the implementation of new walking schemes and cycle routes as part of 'Active Travel' ambitions, delivering sustainable travel plans and increasing the availability of Electric Vehicle Charging Points.
- 6.27 The Department will also expand on the already fantastic work to date to support key ambitions including our vision for net zero emissions by 2027 and ambitions under our Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP).

7. Priorities for the Next Six Months

- 1. Delivery of the Transforming Bromley Programme.
- 2. Support Directors in meeting departmental programmes as set out above.
- 3. Maintain our Long-Term Budget Management and Financial Strategy to manage demand and growth.
- 4. Move the Council's Hub to the new Civic office.
- 5. Meet our statutory and regulatory requirements and inspection readiness.
- 6. Support our workforce.
- 7. Support organisational compliance against all standards and regulations.
- 8. Respond to legislative changes and macro issues from Central Government.
- 9. Inspection and regulatory readiness.
- 10. Partnerships and improved interface with elected members on ward related issues.