

IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2010

Present:

Councillor Neil Reddin (Chairman)
Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P. (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Graham Arthur, Douglas Auld, Eric Bosshard and
Stephen Carr

Also Present:

Councillor Peter Fookes

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ellis, Councillor Evans, Councillor Owen and Councillor Mellor. Councillor Auld attended as alternate to Councillor Mellor.

Apologies for absence were submitted for the Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement and the Committee wished him well.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received from members of the public.

25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH JULY 2010

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2010 be agreed.

26 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

LDCS10169

The Committee were informed that actions developed following the London Efficiency Challenge had been built into the Organisational Improvement Plan and would be included in future updates. Progress around the joint project team with

Bexley Council would also be reported as part of the Organisational Improvement Plan updates.

Information around the Aligning Policy and Finance Workstream was being considered by Policy Development and Scrutiny Committees and would be the subject of ongoing updates.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

27 WEB PRESENTATION

The Chairman invited Keiron Mumby from Jadu CMS to give a presentation demonstrating the range of functionality which could be applied to the Bromley Council website following the agreement of the Executive in September 2010 to award the contract to upgrade and redesign the Bromley website to Jadu CMS.

Jadu CMS currently had over 100 UK customers including the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Southwark and Enfield. Available website functionality included the support of online payments, hosted links to Youtube, Twitter and other social networking sites to support marketing, feedback and a 'sense of place', and a Google powered search product. An 'In My Area' link could be used to bring together information on all the services offered by the Council and its partners in a specific area. A Member suggested that local estate agencies might be interested in purchasing advertising space on these pages.

Members had a general discussion around the redesign of the Bromley website. The Chairman queried whether the new website could link in with back office systems across Bromley Council. Mr Mumby confirmed that a number of back office systems could be linked with the website, such as the CRM system. Councillor Bennett queried how easy it would be for web content to be uploaded and amended. Mr Mumby confirmed that the system was simple to use and web masters and content authors would receive full training.

In terms of designing the new site, it would be important to include input from both Members and local residents. The Communications Working Group had previously developed a number of recommendations around how the website might be better used as a communication tool. The New Technology Working Group was also undertaking a review, and Members suggested the Chairman of the New Technology Working Group be approached to see whether the Members of the Working Group would be interesting in providing initial Member input into the look and feel of the new website. There was also scope to involve members of the public through the existing website.

Councillor Fookes highlighted the use of Socitm 'pop up' survey boxes that were used on a range of websites to support feedback. Mr Mumby confirmed that this could be used on the redesigned website but that there were cost implications.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

28 INTERNAL AUDIT AND VALUE FOR MONEY REPORTING

LDCS10180

The Committee received a report outlining an approach to Value for Money (VfM) reporting by Internal Audit which had been approved by Audit Sub Committee on 16th September 2010.

The VfM methodology included a scoring matrix to be used by Internal Audit in the course of their audit work for reviewing VfM risks and controls, with a rating of 1-4. Where lower scores were recorded, the matter would be referred to the Organisational Improvement Team, who would assist the service concerned. It had been noted that a low score might not necessarily indicate a service offering poor VfM, but might indicate the need to develop more robust systems to substantiate good VfM being delivered by the service. The role of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness Plans in evidencing VfM processes was highlighted, as was the value of undertaking a zero based budgeting exercise.

The Chairman noted the benefits of the new methodology in principle, but underlined the need to ensure that Internal Audit remained focused on its core business. Councillor Bennett highlighted the importance of ensuring VfM was delivered across all processes and noted that Internal Audit was well-placed to identify VfM. Another Member noted the importance of outcome based reviewing across services and initiatives to track progress, particularly regarding 'spend-to-save initiatives' and suggested the outcomes from this new approach to Value for Money reporting be reviewed in due course.

RESOLVED that the approach to Value for Money reporting approved by the Audit Sub-Committee be endorsed, and the role of the Organisational Improvement Team be noted.

29 ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

CEO1063

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

The Committee considered the recent 'Idea's Aloud' events delivered by the Organisational Improvement Team as part of Customer Service Week. The two sessions brought together staff from a range of different services with Councillors to generate a range of improvement and efficiency ideas. The Chairman thanked the Organisational Improvement Team for organising the event as well as those Councillors who attended the sessions and noted that a number of positive ideas had been suggested, including the development of a corporate volunteering programme and formalising processes for Bromley staff to report street scene issues. Participants had also highlighted the importance of more cross-working across the Council to improve service delivery and communication.

With regard to the workstream around Civic Centre Accommodation, the Head of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness confirmed that work was being undertaken with the Director of Renewal and Recreation to ensure efficient use of office space, with the emphasis currently on accommodating additional Children and Young People Department staff on the Civic Centre site.

The Shared Services project with London Borough of Bexley was progressing. A joint board made up of both Borough Chief Executives and key Chief Officers had met twice. Areas that had been identified for progression included procurement and the potential for shared Legal Services across both organisations. Councillor Bennett highlighted the recent review of government waste by Sir Philip Green and queried whether a single procurement strategy was in place across the Council. The Head of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness confirmed that there were a number of framework agreements which the Council, together with other public sector organisations, could access to support efficient procurement. Another Member highlighted that there were regional agreements around joint purchasing of adult and community services. The Committee suggested that it would be useful to have an agreed list of suppliers that could be utilised across all public sector partners.

Regarding the Agency Staff workstream, the Head of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness confirmed that use of agency staff had been reviewed and a revised vacancy management procedure had been issued by HR to ensure the most appropriate route would be used to fill vacancies. There were still difficulties in attracting permanent staff to fill social care vacancies, however HR was working with other boroughs to minimise instances of competing for staff.

The Head of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness confirmed that the rollout of the Voice Recognition System to officers and Members went live on 21st June 2010 with an accuracy rate of 70-80%. Work to improve the accuracy of the system by increasing the VRS vocabulary was currently being undertaken. The procurement process was now underway for both external switchboard calls and 'report it' functionality to handle calls for simple requests. This would be delivered in two separate phases to allow time for development work around the 'report it' function, and delivery of the Voice Recognition System for the external switchboard was scheduled for 1st November 2010.

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

The Meeting ended at 8.50 pm

Chairman