

IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 19 January 2011

Present:

Councillor Neil Reddin (Chairman)
Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P. (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Graham Arthur, Judi Ellis, Russell Jackson,
Russell Mellor and Tony Owen

Also Present:

Councillors Peter Fookes and Michael Tickner

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Bosshard, Councillor Carr and Councillor Evans.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received from members of the public.

33 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 13th OCTOBER 2010

With regard to Item 29: Organisational Improvement Programme Update, Councillor Owen highlighted the importance of reporting progress made against issues identified at the recent 'Ideas Aloud' events delivered by the Organisational Improvement Team as part of Customer Service Week. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed progress made in addressing issues raised would be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2010 be agreed.

34 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

LDCS11014

The Committee were informed that an update around the development of the new corporate website would be provided later in the meeting. Outcomes from the new

approach to value for money reporting would be reported at the next meeting of Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

35 CARBON MANAGEMENT FUND: PROGRESS REPORT 2010

ES09102

In October 2008 the Executive agreed to establish a ring-fenced Carbon Management Fund to 'invest to save' in energy efficiency measures that would both support the Council to achieve a 25% reduction in its carbon emissions over five years and avoid unnecessary costs. The Sub-Committee received a report providing an update on progress made on first and second tranche Carbon Management Funded projects and also identified a range of potential third tranche projects for 2010/11 and beyond.

The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that at the meeting of the Executive on 12th January 2011 a progress report on the Carbon Management Programme (Report ES10188) and a report around the Carbon Reduction Commitment (Report ES10189) had been considered. In response, the Executive had supported the establishment of a Highways Asset Working Group by the Environment PDS Committee to consider matters concerned with street lighting, street signage and energy efficiency, and requested the Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee investigate further ways of reducing energy consumption and look at the benefits associated with renewable energy generation, feed in tariffs and other similar measures.

Members discussed a range of issues around the reduction of carbon emissions. The Chairman queried how annual avoided spend differed from annual savings. The Environmental Development Manager explained that the actual savings generated would be impacted by a range of factors such as increased energy prices or consumption, but that any increased cost would be mitigated by the energy efficiency measures taken (and be avoided spend). Where the reduction in consumption from energy efficiency measures outweighed factors that increased costs, then a true saving would be made. The introduction of energy efficiency measures would also realise additional savings through a reduced Carbon Reduction Commitment 'tax'. With regard to the Carbon Reduction Commitment scheme, Members expressed concern around how schools would be supported to reduce carbon emissions.

A Member queried the data available around levels of energy use and the impact of energy efficiency measures for different Council buildings. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that a range of data was held on energy usage, and a LASER Bureau Service was being introduced to develop a comprehensive database of the entire energy meter estate which would support stronger data management and analysis in future.

The Chairman noted that issues around regular meter reading had been

highlighted as a concern at the recent 'Ideas Aloud' event. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that more than 95% of meters across Council sites had now been identified, and efforts were being made to identify any remaining meters by 31st March 2011. The Chairman highlighted the potential to use meters to recharge actual energy costs to managers to promote reduced energy usage. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that sub-metering was not undertaken on the Civic Centre site, but there was potential for more accurate reporting of energy consumption at distinct sites, such as library buildings.

In terms of potential third tranche projects, the Environmental Development Manager confirmed that a recent Carbon Trust survey had identified inefficient lighting across the Civic Centre Site, and work to install more efficient lighting was proposed. A Member queried whether other companies might provide similar survey work across the Council. The Environmental Development Manager confirmed that a range of organisations had offered surveys, including the London Development Agency through its RE:FIT programme, but subsidised surveys were becoming less common.

Members noted the good progress made in reducing the Council's carbon emissions during 2009/10 and highlighted the potential to publicise the savings made through the Carbon Management Fund, as well as those delivered at other sites across the borough as 'good news' stories.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) progress in work carried out on the first and second tranche Carbon Management Funded projects and comments on proposed third tranche Carbon Management Funded projects be noted;**
- 2) that a further annual report be provided to Improvement and Efficiency Sub-Committee in December 2011 detailing progress on all Carbon Management funded projects and proposals for fourth tranche projects for 2011/12 and beyond.**

36 ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

CEO1167

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

Regarding the Agency Staff workstream, the Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that Human Resources had issued a revised vacancy management procedure in September 2010, and work was being undertaken to fill short term vacancies with redeployed staff rather than those recruited through an agency. It was anticipated that in 2011/12 the spend on agency staff would decrease significantly. Councillor Bennett highlighted the cost implications of recruiting consultants and suggested short term contracts should be used in

instances where staff with specialist knowledge were required.

With regard to work around the Customer Contact Centre service migration, the Landscape Helpdesk would be migrated into the Customer Contact Centre in April 2011. The back-office function of the Registrars Service would be migrated into the Customer Contact Centre in Summer 2011, following implementation of a new e-booking system for the service. The potential for future migrations of services that experienced a high volume of calls or a high proportion of abandoned calls were being considered, and included housing, planning, building control and the school admissions service. A Member highlighted the importance of identifying the reason callers were contacting the Council, as high levels of calls might be better addressed by producing targeted information. Members requested a future item on customer contact across the organisation.

Phase 1 of the Voice Recognition project for internal use across the Council had now been live for over 6 months and was well-used with a success rate of 80%. Phase 2, which would expand the Voice Recognition switchboard function for external use by members of the public would go live in mid-January 2011, subject to successful completion of User Acceptance Testing.

The Shared Services project with the London Boroughs of Bexley and Croydon was progressing, and the potential to jointly deliver some back-office services was being considered. The South East London Group was working to map contract spend by Councils across the region to support future joint-contracting exercises. Councillor Bennett highlighted the potential for outsourcing and encouraging staff to set up social enterprises to deliver Council services. Councillor Bennett also underlined savings that could be delivered through increased digitisation of information to reduce both printing and storage costs, for example, moving to print-on-demand for Council information leaflets.

The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that following the announcement of the merger of Legal, Democratic and Customer Services Department with the Resources Department, further exploratory work would be undertaken to ensure the correct organisational structure was in place to deliver Members' objectives.

RESOLVED that the progress made to date on projects led by the Organisational Improvement Programme be noted.

37 'TELL US ONCE' PROJECT - PRESENTATION

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the 'Tell us Once' Project from the Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness Team Project Officer. The 'Tell us Once' Project was a national initiative being led by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), that aimed to provide a single point of contact for the notification of births and deaths. By attending an appointment with Registrars, up to 25 core agencies would be informed of a birth or death, supporting better customer service and a range of back office efficiencies. There would be no charge for this service.

Phase 1 of the project would support the notification of bereavements and would be delivered in June 2011. Phase 2 would support the notification of births in September 2011. A future phase was also being planned by the DWP to support change of address notification.

Members discussed the 'Tell us Once' Project. In response to a query from Members, Officers confirmed the introduction of the initiative was being funded by the DWP, and that the only cost implication for the Council was in staff time for those working on the project. In response to a query about signposting the new service, the Project Officer confirmed that doctors' surgeries, hospitals and undertakers would be targeted to raise awareness around the 'Tell us Once' Project.

Councillor Bennett noted that Transport for London was not included in the list of core agencies involved in the project. The Project Officer confirmed that DWP was looking to include concessionary travel providers in the list of core agencies in future. The Chairman queried whether private institutions such as banks or private pension providers might be included in the scheme.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

38 OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

CEO1166

The Sub-Committee received a report updating Members on the progress made around plans to improve the utilisation and efficiency of existing Council office accommodation on the Civic Centre site.

The Head of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness confirmed that Civic Centre accommodation had been considered at the meeting of the Executive on 8th December 2010, and approval in principle had been granted to release £2m for the refurbishment programme to upgrade civic centre offices and release Ann Springman and Joseph Lancaster Buildings and the Old Town Hall by 2012/13. Proposals were also underway to amalgamate reception points across the Civic Centre site, which was being led by the Director of Legal, Democratic and Customer Services. Work was currently being undertaken with Directors to identify the accommodation needs of their Departments, with storage becoming a particular concern. The Public Protection Division would be reducing the amount of office space occupied by 50% by the end of January 2011, and reducing some of their ICT resources. The space freed up would provide some additional accommodation which could be used by staff moving temporarily out of North Block whilst refurbishment works were undertaken.

In response to a question about the potential for Ann Springman and Joseph Lancaster Buildings to be leased to key partners, the Head of Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness confirmed it was unlikely the space would meet the needs of potential tenants but that any opportunities would be considered prior to final proposals being developed. Talks were also ongoing to accommodate

representatives of Public Health and GP Consortia on the Civic Centre site and the implications of this were factored into future plans. In response to a question from a Member, Officers confirmed that new office furniture would be provided to maximise the efficient usage of open plan office space where appropriate, however any displaced office furniture would be reused.

RESOLVED the update on the Office Accommodation Strategy be noted.

39 CORPORATE WEBSITE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received an update on progress in developing the new corporate website.

The Senior Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness Analyst confirmed that significant progress had been made in developing the new website, including the review of existing website content, a design survey which had consulted over 100 people including Members, the design studio, service managers and web editors, and the completion of final designs. The new website would incorporate more images, including the use of video and social media, have an 'uncluttered' feel and provide increased access to self-service options. A Member was concerned the use of video might cause those accessing the website through smartphones and PDAs to exceed their usage, which could have cost implications.

Members discussed the design of the new website and the Chairman queried whether members of the public had been consulted as part of the design survey. The Senior Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness Analyst confirmed that the design of the website was flexible and that feedback from members of the public would be acted on following the launch of the new site on 1st April 2011. A Member suggested residents' associations be approached to provide their comments on the new website.

A Member queried whether analysis had been undertaken around the usage of the existing website. The Senior Improvement, Efficiency and Effectiveness Analyst confirmed that 'heat maps' of the website that identified the most popular pages had been developed to inform the build. Another Member queried whether the website could be updated out-of-hours. The Assistant Director: Organisational Improvement confirmed that in the event of a serious incident, the website would be updated as part of the emergency communications strategy. The new website could also be updated from a remote location if required. Councillor Bennett noted that other technologies such as SMS messaging could also be used to support stronger communications.

RESOLVED that the progress made on developing the new corporate website be noted.

The Meeting ended at 9.27 pm

Chairman