Report No. CEO1172	**London Borough of Bromley**	
	PART 1 - PUBLIC	

Decision Maker:	**I&E Sub Committee**	
Date:	**April 2011**	
Decision Type:	Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key	
Title:	**IDEAS ALOUD LIVE**	
Contact Officer:	Chris Spellman, AD Organisational Improvement Team Tel: 020 8461 7942 E-mail: chris.spellman@bromley.gov.uk	
Chief Officer:	Doug Patterson, Chief Executive	
Ward:	All Wards	

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1. Reason for report

1.1 At the last I&E Sub Committee Members requested that a report come back to the next meeting on the Ideas Aloud Live sessions that were run in October 2010.

1.2 This report, therefore, summarises the sessions, looks at the themes that emerged and also the lessons learnt. Finally the report records how corporately the organisation has been responding to the issues raised in the sessions.

1.3 Members will recall that a verbal update and discussion was provided at the I&E Sub Committee meeting back in October 2010 where the Chairman 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" (*Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2010*). This report follows on from that update.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 **That Members note the report. Specifically the themes raised by staff and the Corporate steps to address many of the issues highlighted.**

2.2 **That Members consider limiting future sessions to a tightly focused issue or section of staff given the resource that we can allocate to these events and the need for manageable actions to come out of the process.**

Corporate Policy

1.   Policy Status: N/A.

2.   BBB Priority: Excellent Council.

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Financial

1.   Cost of proposal: N/A

2.   Ongoing costs: N/A.

3.   Budget head/performance centre: Organisational Improvement Team

4.   Total current budget for this head: £

5.   Source of funding:

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Staff

1.   Number of staff (current and additional): 5 FTE

2.   If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:

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Legal

1.   Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.

2.   Call-in: <please select>

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Customer Impact

1.   Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):

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Ward Councillor Views

1.   Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No.

2.   Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3.   COMMENTARY

3.1   A brief summary of the two sessions held on 7th & 11th October 2010:

➢ 35 staff attended over the two sessions from across all the Departments

➢ 6 Councillors took time to attend and support the sessions

➢ Every member of staff got the chance to discuss and work through an issue that impacted on them and their team

➢ Front line staff enjoyed the opportunity to talk directly with Members

3.2   The sessions were facilitated by an external training provider. Both sessions were run in the same format with staff split into tables of five with one Member and one OIP team representative to record and capture what was discussed. Each member of staff had a chance to raise an issue or idea that they wished to talk about and then the table had a chance to brainstorm ideas and potential solutions.

3.3   Looking in more detail at the issues staff wanted to raise and discuss with Members a number of key themes emerged:

Internal communications – issues about staff understanding what was going on in other teams and departments. They often struggled to know who was responsible for a particular service, or finding the right person who could help solve an issue and thereby avoiding duplication of work. Off site teams seemed to be particularly affected by what they saw as a lack of access to corporate information.

A lot of work has recently gone into internal communications, especially with regard to addressing the recent uncertainty for staff around the savings agenda. 'Doug's Page' is now regularly updated and emails have been sent out to all officers highlighting the budget position and savings required over the next 4 years. The Corporate Operating Principles are also being refreshed to reflect changing circumstances and to communicate a coherent message about the organisation during these challenging times for staff and managers.

The Assistant Chief Executive, HR and Director of Environment are also leading a group of staff, which is representative of all levels and departments, looking at improving staff engagement. A major theme of this work is improving internal communications. The proposals and action plan from this group will be reported to Members by way of a future I&E Sub Committee.

External communications – a number of issues were also raised concerning our communication with our customers. A number of staff felt that initial contact with customers could be tightened up by improving web content; getting customers to the right officer to deal with their inquiry quickly and efficiently; and by making sure all the appropriate staff were briefed and ready to deal with customer calls once a piece of council communication had gone out to residents.

The contact centre, which was established in 2001, is continually evaluating telephone traffic and looking to migrate appropriate calls into the customer contact centre and improve the quality of initial customer contact. A new voice recognition system, as well as a full upgrade to the council's website should help to address some of the issues staff were frustrated by. Further investment into additional online functionality including more e-forms, e-bookings and mapping should help customers be able to access the services they want quickly and easily at a time that is suitable to them. It should also help staff get important messages out to residents quickly and effectively.

Operational inefficiency and IT systems – the need to simplify our systems and processes and the way we do business was raised by a number of staff. They expressed a need for basic day-to-day activities that cut across more than one system or team to be streamlined. They highlighted the quantity, quality and content of meetings suggesting tighter agendas, stronger chairmen, and actively limiting staff time in meetings to help improve their overall effectiveness across the Council. They often recognised the range of different IT systems across departments as being potential blockers to making processes more efficient.

However, interestingly, staff clearly recognised the advantages of automated IT systems to make processes more efficient as they also highlighted the need to move away from paper based working. The Head of I.S is to conduct a review of back office IT systems and the associated licence costs to try to look at where there is room for further integration and savings.

Staff Training & HR – issues were raised around clarity of HR's role and level of support as well as the need for staff development and training. Linking in with IT systems it was felt that one solution would be to provide some basic compulsory training on core IT systems, processes and procedures within teams which could help resolve a lot of issues around operational inefficiencies.

Information Systems have invested in a simple tool to help produce online training courses. The web team will be piloting it when putting together a training package for content editors across all departments who produce content for our website. HR are also looking at online solutions moving to online payment slips, forms up on OneBromley and fully online recruitment. The corporate budget for training and development for staff remains relatively small and so there are currently limitations to the amount of training available. The recent staff engagement group will also be taking forward an action plan titled 'The Bromley Commitment to Staff' which sets out what is expected from all employees, managers and those that exercise a key leadership role. As stated previously, the details of this will be brought back to a future I&E Sub Committee.

3.4   Many of the issues that made up these themes were seen as being long standing and staff felt that there were cultural factors that could not be resolved over night. Staff felt many of the issues were not any single manager's responsibility and would require clear corporate decisions before progress to resolve them could be made – i.e. *invest in an organisational chart covering all staff, have a new policy that the web team check all content before it's published on the website, invest in running a skills audit across all staff.*

Staff brought issues rather than ideas to the sessions which was by no means a bad thing as it gave them a chance to express their frustrations and misgivings about processes and procedures directly to Members. Staff often found it hard to come up with obvious solutions to what they saw as long standing issues but, nevertheless, were very aware of the blockers across the organisation and were keen to discuss possible fixes such as *improving the HR information accessible on OneBromley, and tightening up meetings with clear agendas and stronger chairmanship of meetings.*

3.5   There were a number of lessons learnt. These sessions were pilots to see if this type of session could be helpfully used to unblock issues and generate potential solutions from the bottom up. However, it became clear that staff did not always feel in control of fixing some of the issues raised and the session was deliberately wide in terms of the range of issues discussed by representatives across all the departments that it was hard to genuinely have the time to develop real solutions.

In future, what may be more effective in terms of dealing with the issues raised in these sessions would be to target a session at a particular issue or problem or even at a specific team facilitating them to discuss and debate an outstanding issue and then supporting them to take

action. The staff in the sessions would benefit from being the same staff that can take positive steps to fix whatever the issue is that's being raised.

3.6 Although we have been unable to follow up on all of these issues to the degree we would have liked a number of our cross cutting projects including the accommodation plan and web site upgrade have been informed by the feedback and have meant that corporately we have been able to address a number of the larger issues raised by staff. Appendix 1 shows the individual issues staff raised. The final column shows corporately what action has been taken or is currently in the process of being implemented to tackle some of these long standing issues.

Non-Applicable Sections:	4. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**
	5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
	6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**
	7. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]