

## Bromley/Bexley Library Shared Services Consultation

### Themed Comments Received from Bromley Staff and Representatives during Consultation Period (Ended 5 July 2011)

The responses from staff and their representatives generally fell into a number of similar themes. These have been collated below. Given that the consultation process was being twin tracked in Bexley all comments received were acknowledged at the time of receipt. Staff and their representatives were advised that following the conclusion of the consultation period comments received across the two boroughs would be collectively reviewed by the joint project team from Bromley and Bexley and where appropriate any changes to the proposals would be fed back to staff as part of the response to consultation.

Issues Raised	Responses
<b>General</b>	
Comment on why the Council has chosen the Library service for Shared Services rather than other departments with back office functions.	Library management and back office functions are one of a range of service areas being reviewed at this time.
Other Authorities are sharing services from the top down. This proposal has the HoS reporting to two ADs – is that efficient.	The governance arrangements will establish an efficient process.
Bromley appears to out perform Bexley on revenue costs. Why then is Bexley the host borough for the shared services.	Whilst Bexley will be the host borough the proposal for combining the library back office and management functions will enable two authorities to merge a range of functions to create efficiencies whilst simultaneously saving revenue costs. The structure has been created to meet this ambition. the 2009/10 CIPFA statistics demonstrate that LB Bexley marginally out-performed Bromley in five out of eight areas
The Council should consider having fewer but better libraries to reduce duplication of services where branches are situated close together.	The Members Working Party considered a range of options including library closures. The concept of 'shared services' will reduce costs from the back office, whilst protecting front line library services.

Issues Raised	Responses
<p>Why is the proposed Shared Service adopting a four tier structure similar to that in Bexley at present. Some Bromley staff feel the proposals appear to favour Bexley and are a disincentive to Bromley staff.</p>	<p>The structure has been agreed jointly between the Boroughs and reflects what is considered to be an appropriate support structure going forward.</p>
<p>Some posts look like existing Bexley posts.</p>	<p>The job descriptions for the new posts were compiled jointly using elements of both services' job descriptions to reflect future service needs.</p>
<p>How will it be ensured that time/resources are divided equitably between the two Boroughs so that Bromley residents continue to receive a quality service?</p>	<p>The governance arrangements will ensure that the needs of both boroughs are being met through the equitable use of the shared staff. The emphasis of these new shared posts is to provide a strong shared strategic vision for the shared service and establish a structure that can commission, plan and execute consistent quality and offers services to customers across the two boroughs.</p>
<p>Why has Footscray been chosen as the base. There is a loss of amenities for Bromley staff who currently work in Central Bromley. Staff there will have difficulty keeping in touch with front line services/customers. Where will touch down spaces be? Which staff will be expected to travel as part of their role? Request for further clarity in relation to individual roles.</p>	<p>Seems the most sensible location as it is on the boundary of both Boroughs. Due to the nature of many new roles whilst staff will have Footscray as their main base it is anticipated that they will spend the majority of their time in the libraries themselves. The newly appointed Shared Service managers will be expected to look at the further detailed arrangements for individual members of staff but it is envisaged that staff will be provided with touch down space across the Boroughs to enable them to work flexibly.</p>
<p><b>Service Specific Issues</b></p>	
<p>The scale of saving is detrimental to the service in both Boroughs and the loss of qualified librarian posts will impact on the delivery of front line services.</p>	<p>The new structure takes account of front line needs, e.g. the addition of Community Learning and Outreach Assistant posts. The service priorities will need to be managed by the newly appointed service managers with a view of maintaining a quality service.</p>

Issues Raised	Responses
Have the proposals taken into account sufficiently the effect on the front line services, ie support currently given by the Librarians; IT. Has consideration been given to all the tasks currently carried out and the cost where some work will now be undertaken externally, e.g. IT.	There will be a different way of working and priorities will need to be considered in conjunction with the newly appointed senior managers during the transition period up to 31 March 2012.
Has account been taken of the loss of expertise gained over a long period of time that could be lost through the proposals? Quality of service will deteriorate with the drastic reduction in librarian expertise to plan, co-ordinate, manage, evaluate, prioritise and deliver services.	Expect to appoint the best people to the new structure and to retain a good deal of expertise. Will be appointing staff with a variety of skills who are prepared to work flexibly to meet customer needs.
Without sufficient librarians to train and improve skills, customers will go without information to help them make some vital choices and decisions.	The librarians appointed to the new service will be engaged in planning the service delivery and there will be training where needed for front line customer service assistants.
Have the two strands of the proposed IS changes been thought through and are the proposed staffing levels and transition arrangements proposed adequate across the two boroughs,  ie Corporate contracts and support Library Management Systems changes/integration/maintenance	A detailed review of the current IT requirements and what will be needed going forward is being undertaken, taking into account comments received as part of the consultation process.
How can a local studies manager be an 'expert' across both Boroughs. Local studies research and services will be damaged by the proposals	Whilst there will be fewer staff, not all expertise will be lost. Training will be in place to deal with customer expectations by the time the Shared Service is in place.
Community links will be broken – is it worth it to make relatively small savings.	As above, we would expect staff to maintain these important links.
Has sufficient account been taken of the effect the proposals will have on reader development services for children and young people and the personal service appreciated by elderly users.	Would expect the same customer service standards to apply within the service priorities set by the new managers.
The reduction proposed in Stock Services is too great.	Service requirements going forward have been taken into account and the expectation is that the team will be resourced sufficiently to undertake the new roles.

Issues Raised	Responses
Will operational staff be offered a meeting about the effect Shared Services may have on them.	Expect this to be a task to be undertaken by the new managers once the Shared Service proposals are agreed.
Volunteers are effectively used in some areas, eg local studies but could not be successfully used to keep branches open. Some opposition to the use of volunteers. Volunteers have not been successfully used elsewhere, eg Swindon	No expectation that volunteers will keep branches open but some volunteers will be used as at present to support and enhance existing services.
How will some of the current back office work such as promotions and training be accommodated in the future.	Details of how tasks will be managed will be considered by the newly appointed managers.
Will current HR/Finance systems change in the Shared Service.	Not initially. The current systems will remain in place. But work will be undertaken to reduce duplication wherever possible to achieve efficiencies.
<b>HR/Change Management Issues</b>	
Content of some job descriptions needs clarity and/or revision, eg Business Support Officer Business Support Assistant Librarians Stock Services posts	Following the end of consultation comments have been considered jointly with Bexley. Where changes to job descriptions have been made staff will be notified as soon as possible.
Some posts should be ring fenced to a wider group of staff than currently identified. Staff ring fenced only for higher graded posts are put at a disadvantage and should also be ring fenced for lower graded posts, eg the Community Learning and Outreach Assistant posts.	Comments from staff in both Bromley and Bexley have been carefully considered and as a consequence some of the ring fenced arrangements have now changed. Changes will be notified to staff as soon as possible.
Query the reporting line of the Facilities Manager who will be supervised by the Improvement, Training and Support Manager. Also query on the grade of the new post which is lower than the current Bromley Facilities Manager. Query whether some of the duties would sit better within an admin post.	As part of the Shared Services this post will be managed as described in the proposed structure chart. The Job evaluation for the post of Facilities Manager has confirmed the grade. Comments received have been considered jointly.

Issues Raised	Responses
Why are Bexley staff on higher and lower grades than Bromley staff included in the same ring fence arrangements.	In line with managing change procedures the proposed ring fence aims to ensure that appropriate staff are given the opportunity to apply for like jobs in the structure and to provide a “best fit” which recognises variations in the procedures of both boroughs. The aim is not to disadvantage staff from either borough from being considered for jobs that best match their current roles and responsibilities.
Why are some posts being filled by direct assimilation rather than being opened up to all staff.	This is in line with managing change procedures, however where comments have been received about other roles overlapping with some proposed assimilations this has been reviewed and in some cases ring fence and assimilation arrangements have now been changed. Staff affected by these changes will be notified as soon as possible.
Pay protection should be in full and not limited to eight spinal column points.	Proposed salary protection is in line with the Council’s managing change procedures.
Will operational staff who have asked to express an interest in voluntary redundancy/early retirement be offered a further opportunity at a later date.	If further reorganisations take place which have staffing and redundancy implications there would be further opportunity for staff to express an interest.
How will it be decided which staff will be released on grounds of voluntary redundancy/early retirement.	This will be on a case by case basis subject to the interest of the Council.
When will voluntary redundancy/early retirements take effect if they are agreed.	This will be on a case by case basis depending on the business need and appointments made in the new shared services structure.
How and when will decisions be taken about voluntary redundancy/early retirement and outcomes known.	The intention is to respond wherever possible prior to interviews for the new posts being held.
How independent will the independent person be who will be taking part in the interview panels. The principles of appointment need to be transparent – Bromley staff feel disadvantaged.	All interview panels will include someone who is impartial and not employed by either Council. Having someone on the panel totally independent will ensure that interviews will not be weighted more favourably to one or other staff group.

Issues Raised	Responses
Will staff have to complete application forms for new posts.	Process to be agreed jointly and staff will be notified
Will interview performance be the only criteria for selection for the new posts	Process to be agreed jointly and staff will be notified.
Will staff be expected to have more than one interview if they apply for multiple posts.	Wherever possible only one interview will be held with separate questions being asked that are specific to each post. Where posts are dissimilar however multiple interviews may be necessary.
What arrangements will be made if staff are on leave at the time scheduled interviews.	Leave arrangements will be considered when the interview programme is drawn up however staff should ensure that they advise management of any dates they will be unavailable when asked to express an interest in posts they may wish to apply for.
Will successful staff be offered training if required and if so who would undertake it.	Yes – where required staff will be provided with appropriate training in order to fully undertake the new roles and responsibilities.
Will staff receive travel expenses. The travel costs and travel time for some staff to Footscray is unacceptable and staff should be compensated for this.	Necessary excess travel expenses will be paid to Bromley staff from the Bromley boundary for travel within Bexley for a period of four years and no further compensation will be payable.
Some staff will lose out financially by two increments as some of the new posts will not require weekend working. At the present time two increments are payable to take account of working Saturdays.	This is no different to current arrangements where someone changes from a job that requires weekend working to a new role that does not. Additional increments for working weekends are not protected under the salary protection arrangements.