



MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Tuesday 12 June 2012 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ketan Sheth (in the Chair) and Councillors Chohan, Gladbaum, Lorber, McLennan, BM Patel and Pavey

Also present: Councillor Butt

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Ashraf, Colwill and Mitchell Murray

Election of Chair

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, nominations were invited for the position of Chair.

RESOLVED:-

that Councillor Ketan Sheth be elected Chair for the duration of the meeting.

1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

Councillor Chohan declared a personal non prejudicial interest as he was a member of Brent Indian Association.

Councillor BM Patel declared a personal non prejudicial interest as he was a registered volunteer, sitting on the board at London Road Nursery, Patidar House.

In relation to item 7, Working with Families Initiative – Update, Councillor Pavey declared a personal non prejudicial interest as he was a member of the Wembley Locality Advisory Board.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 March 2012**

The minutes of the last meeting of the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 March 2012 were approved as a correct record.

3. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. **Waste Collection**

The Head of Recycling and Waste, Chris Whyte introduced the report and provided a progress update with respect to the One Council Waste and Street Cleansing Review, in particular the performance of the waste collection and street cleansing services that were changed as part of that project. Chris Whyte highlighted key progress statistics detailed within the report including; an increase in the overall

recycling rate from 29% to 41% incorporating a 14% reduction in total waste, a 28% reduction in household waste landfilled; a 36% increase in waste recycled and a 6% increase in waste composted.

The Head of Recycling and Waste stated that reductions in street cleansing had led to deterioration in some areas and compared to 2010/11 the number of streets showing a less than acceptable level of litter increased by 5% and the number of streets showing a less than acceptable level of detritus increased by 6%.

The Head of Recycling and Waste explained that the strategy set a clear ambition to recycle 50% by 2014, with the Government's goal seeking to reach 60% by 2015. In those areas that had been identified as needing particular attention, officers would work to engage with councillors and community groups to understand local concerns and to develop solutions.

The Head of Recycling and Waste concluded stating that the second phase of the project to improve the new service and to procure the waste service contract for 2014 onwards was being implemented and was at an early stage.

During the discussion that followed, members queried the target recycling rate and whether it was the Government target of 60% or the Council's 50% should be aimed for. Although 50% was considered to be a realistic target for the service in its current form, the Head of Recycling and Waste explained that if future initiatives and improvements into how waste was treated were explored, then the 60% target could be achieved. It was noted that although there was still progress to be made, a seasonal uplift was expected and that the true effect of the new system was likely to be higher with the potential to reach the 50% target by April 2013.

Members queried the intended duration of the new waste contract and although the standard duration was seven years to coincide with the life expectancy of a waste disposal vehicle, the Head of Recycling and Waste explained that the contract length was not yet decided and the optimum length would be determined once work was underway.

Following queries from the members, it was reported that the service was now operating a full complement of staff with one member of the team on long term sick leave. Additionally, the service would be bidding for funding from the weekly collection support scheme which would be used to improve the organic waste collection service.

Members expressed concern regarding fly tipping and dumping in the area, (in particular the continued dumping in former boxes) uncollected rubbish that was becoming contaminated in gardens and engagement with landlords. The Head of Recycling and Waste noted that it was a problem in certain parts of the borough where the new waste regime had not been embraced and focused work was being undertaken to improve the situation without additional resource for example through changes to collection days. Additionally it was noted that some households may have unused bins from the previous collection regime which were unsightly and a potential hazard.

Councillor Lorber recommended that a one off exercise be undertaken with the contractor to collect and clear green boxes which were clearly being used for refuse to help improve the recycling rates for the future. The Head of Recycling and Waste stated that the practicalities and costs would need to be discussed with the contractor and the risks of removing items from gardens that may be in use. With regard to landlords, work was being undertaken to identify persons responsible and issue first stage enforcement. Members highlighted the free collection service offered by the Council and requested literature to circulate to target specific areas on ward walks. It was agreed that a prototype literature would be made available although it was noted that the service was not available to landlords. It was explained that flats were behind in recycling rates as communal points were an obstacle, with work being undertaken to identify areas and initiatives to address the issues. Members also raised concerns over additional charges for businesses to have more than one bin and the continued problem of bins left on the streets for extended periods. Members were encouraged to report problems to the council as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted

5. **Services for Young People Project**

The Assistant Director of Policy, Cathy Tyson, gave a verbal update on the One Council's Services for Young People project. It was noted that there was a high proportion of young people in the borough, particularly ages 13-19, with a rising concern over the impact of poverty and deprivation could have on young person's future employment.

Cathy Tyson explained that there was a complex range of fragmented services provided by the Council and a variety of voluntary agencies and the project wanted to ensure relevant and accessible provision was offered to the most vulnerable. The Council had a legal duty to provide effective leisure and educational activities which benefited the physical, social and emotional well-being of young people. The Assistant Director of Policy highlighted that recent changes in legislation did not specify the level of provision that was considered to be sufficient but highlighted that the services should reflect the needs and aspirations of young persons and be delivered as far as was practical. Mindful of the level of provision needing to be practical, a mapping exercise was being undertaken to ascertain the type of provision provided, geographical location, value for money by funded projects, number of users and frequency of service provided by the council and other agencies.

The Assistant Director of Policy informed the committee that the aims and key questions for the project (following the mapping exercise) included; a governance and commission strategy, reduction of duplication, focusing on beneficial outcomes from activities, supporting the most at risk and vulnerable young people, using youth centres creatively and preparing young people for adult life and employment.

A consultation exercise had been commissioned by an independent specialist group and as part of the project the Youth Parliament had been approached to help ensure a 25% consultation rate. The consultation would be undertaken during June

and July and continued into the summer programme to test provision as well as include a broad based web survey, specific focus group and events.

During the discussion that followed, it was clarified that 0-19 year olds constituted 26%% of the population. Members felt that a visible register of all services available should be provided. The Assistant Director of Policy explained that courses often tended to be short therefore the register would frequently change which could result in communication of what was on offer being diluted. It was noted that the governance structure would help to regulate communication and the Youth Parliament was keen to build on Be My Voice.

Members queried how the project fitted in with supporting vulnerable young people. It was explained that by adjoining and aligning services, cross referencing could take place when referring vulnerable young persons. It was felt that young people from vulnerable families would benefit from mainstream provision and further consideration needed to be given to therapeutic behaviour provision.

Members enquired how radical the solutions could be and whether the council would withdraw from traditionally provided activities to fund alternative provision. It was felt that a balance needed to be struck between youth and sport provision with all options, including radical options being considered by members. It was noted that the youth and sport budget was approximately £2,600,000.00, ward working approximately £114,000.00, and specialist grant funded provision approximately £500,000.00

The members asked how the service provision could be improved whilst achieving savings. It was explained that through reconfiguration and effective commissioning, and addressing the work within the voluntary sector, efficiencies could be achieved whilst improving the service provided.

During discussion it was clarified that schools would be contacted as part of the consultation process and requested to take part in future communication initiatives. It was confirmed that outcomes were difficult to measure, particularly as the output may not be direct or obvious as well as potentially being long term.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted

6. **Working with Families Initiative - Update**

The Director of Strategy, Partnership and Improvements, Phil Newby, introduced and outlined the development of a suite of four new One Council projects that would collectively deliver a 'Working with Families' Initiative for the borough. It was stated that there were three internal drivers for the project: lack of early help, lack of co-ordination between departments and agencies which had often led to a fragmented approach to meeting family needs leading to gaps, shortfalls or duplication in provision, and balancing demand with resources. In addition to the three internal drivers, there was a change in social practices acting as an external driver.

The Director of Strategy, Partnership and Improvements informed the Committee that a team had been engaged to carry out diagnostic work. In March 2012 Brent Council formally committed to deliver the central government initiated Troubled Families programme at a local level. The delivery of the Troubled Families programme would be embedded in the Working with Families Initiative while providing an impetus for improving the way early intervention services were organised and delivered. A holistic approach would be undertaken when working with families with the key warning drivers of employment, educational attainment, crime and children at the edge of care being used to identify eligible families. The Council had a target of helping 810 troubled families and for the current year, 500 families had initially been identified and information regarding the families' employment status was being sought from the Department for Work and Pensions, with the intention to work with 300 of the families. It was noted that by diverting children on the edge of care, the money saved could be reallocated to preventative measures.

Members queried how the new programme of projects differed from earlier initiatives. It was highlighted that the use of key workers was unique to the project and the ability to use professional support when necessary. It differed to the common assessment framework as it revolved around the family as a whole, not just the child.

Concern was expressed regarding staff morale within Children and Families following the two restructuring exercises prior to the adoption of another change in working practices. It was clarified that the projects were not about restructuring but about reengineering how the council and partners worked to address the needs of a family.

Members queried whether funding was being provided to help with the new initiative. It was explained that while some funding was provided, this was an opportunity to save money in the long term through early intervention. It was noted that the project involved various CMT members to ensure commitment and drive as well as incorporating senior officers of partners such as the Police and NHS.

RESOLVED:-

that members noted the report

7. The One Council Programme - First Update - 2012/13

Peter Stachniewski, Head of the One Council Programme, highlighted that the purpose of the programme was to deliver savings as well as fundamentally look at how services were being delivered. A progress update was given highlighting that the programme had increased to 37 projects from the original 23 with the inclusion of projects such as Working with Families. There were 14 cross-council projects, 15 single department projects, two multi department projects and six partnership projects with 12 projects being formally closed including transitions of children into adult life.

It was explained that there were currently two projects rated red; special education needs due to a significant over spend and procurement which was in place but still needed to be developed and embedded within the organisation.

It was noted that the most significant risk area at a programme level remained the delivery of financial benefits, with gross savings of £81,000,000 to be made by 2014/15. It was highlighted that there was a predicted shortfall of £340,000 for the current financial year although this would be achieved later within the programme. The programme offered non-financial benefits including improved service delivery, improved procurement and contract managing and streamlined management.

During discussion, members queried whether the programme was time limited or on-going. It was clarified that the programme was time limited although could be revisited if necessary.

Discussion regarding the level of outside support provided took place and it was explained that due to the expansion of the programme, additional external resources were required in the form of project managers. The level of support projects required was at such a level that continuing to use senior managers would prevent them from being able to undertake their day job as well as specialist skills being required in some cases. Although the level of external support varied depending upon each project, it was clarified that high levels of support were provided in house by Brent Council staff to ensure maximum skills transfer, with the expectation that external support would decrease with the up skilling of Brent Council staff.

Councillor Lorber drew attention to the reference in the report to increase useage of libraries and proposed that the report be amended to reflect the programme being about savings only.

Councillor Butt (leader of the council) clarified that the remaining libraries were being improved to deliver a better quality service and that the statement in the report was therefore correct. Councillor Lorber's proposal was put to the vote and declared lost. Councillor Lorber asked that his assent be recorded.

8. One Council Overview and Scrutiny work programme

The Policy and Performance Officer, Priya Mistry, highlighted that the work programme would be further populated following discussions with the Chair. It was agreed that members would notify the Policy and Performance Officer within the next two weeks of any items they wished to be placed on the work programme.

Councillor Lorber proposed that the effective support of voluntary libraries be added to the programme in the light of recent events. Members of the Committee queried how the item contributed to the One Council projects. It was clarified that pop up libraries did not form part of the Brent library transformation programme and that work was currently being undertaken to help facilitate discussions between Kensal Rise Library campaigners and All Souls College.

It was noted that the annual complaints report would be discussed at the October meeting.

9. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 24 July 2012.

10. **Any other urgent business**

None

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Ketan Sheth
Chair