



MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Tuesday 18 March 2014 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Chohan, Long, Mitchell Murray and Powney ,

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Colwill, Harrison and Lorber.

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Deputations

None.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 22 January 2014

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising

Item 6, Update: Brent One Oracle Project

Ben Spinks, Assistant Chief Executive, informed members that Brent One Oracle project would go live soon although they still did not have a definite date. He added that there were still ongoing discussions taking place with the other five boroughs involved to ensure that the system was reliable and robust. Members sought clarification as to whether the project would now be over budget and it was agreed that an update would be presented at the next meeting.

Item 7, Civic Centre and Move to the Civic Centre – Programme Updates

At the previous meeting members had asked for an update on improvements to exits from the Civic Centre. Officers stated that they would contact Richard Barrett regarding this and pass on the information to members.

5. Performance and Finance Report

Mark Fairchild, Team Leader Performance, introduced the Performance and Finance Review of Quarter 2, explaining that they were about to enter Quarter 3. He explained that 37% of the Council's overall performance was on target or just below target and that 27% was below target and classified as red. He then outlined each area of the Council, starting with Adult Social Care. Members were informed that Adult Social Care were not currently meeting the 86% target for completion of Mental Health assessments within four weeks and that this was being addressed

through phase one of a two-stage project. In regards to Children and Families, it was explained that 12 out of the 15 secondary schools in Brent had been judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding and that in Quarter 2, the number of primary schools deemed to be inadequate had now improved from three to two. It was added that there were action plans in place to ensure that the remaining two schools continued to improve. Members were also informed that as the Council had more in house Foster Carers they were using less independent foster carers that cost the council more money. Currently 87 children were placed with independent foster carers which was less than the target of 97.

The highlights for Environment and Neighbourhoods were that sport visits were 10% over target and there had been a marked increase in the number of flytipping inspections and investigations. It was noted that Brent were in top 25% of London Boroughs for household recycling and for the number of kilograms of waste recycled. It was hoped that once the new Public Realm contract came into place that they would introduce a number of measures to improve recycling. The highlights identified for Regeneration and Growth were that 98% of repairs were completed on the first visit which exceeded the target of 95%. Also the number of people being placed in temporary accommodation was less than anticipated but it was noted that the full impact of welfare reform had not been established yet. It was added that Council Tax collection was on target for Quarter 2 and Quarter 3. Members were then informed that planning applications were taking, on average, longer than 8 weeks but there were a number of factors that were contributing to this including officer hand over to BIBS and the move to the Civic Centre. It was also taking longer than hoped to process new benefit claims as they were still managing a backlog of claims created in Quarter 1.

The forecast was that there would be an under spend in Quarter 2 of 0.1 million but there had been an overspend of 0.7 million in Quarter 1. However this was offset by higher than anticipated level of grant money.

In response to questions raised Mark Fairchild informed members that he would find out who set the 86% target for mental health assessments. He also undertook to provide a briefing note from Children and Families regarding how they planned to help the schools in the borough that were deemed inadequate by Ofsted and how Brent's schools compared with the rest of London in this area. Members also asked for clarification as to why violence had risen in the Borough and where this had happened as they were under the belief that violence was decreasing in Brent. Members also expressed that it was not helpful to set unrealistic targets in terms of recycling nor was it helpful to compare Brent to other London Boroughs in this instance. Members asked for information regarding whether the number of compliant premises supplying food were registered to sell food or not as they believed that unlicensed premises were a major problem in the Borough.

Margaret Read informed members that the Planning Team were currently undergoing restructuring and that some of administrative work, of a more technical nature, was moving from BIBS back into the planning team. Therefore they were working hard to ensure that the number of applications processed in Quarter 3 and 4 was increasing.

Members questioned whether the Council tax support scheme would negatively impact upon the council tax collection rate. Margaret Read stated they had worked

hard with the people that new scheme effected to ensure that they would be able to pay. As a result the collection rate was forecast to be only 0.3% lower than 2012/13 with a forecast collection rate of 95.5% for 31 March 2014. This was higher than the anticipated collection rate of 93.8%. The feedback was that Brent was also doing better than other boroughs who had introduced a similar scheme. It was added that there had been an relatively small increase in the number of summonses issued. It was agreed that members would be provided with a breakdown of summonses issued to those on the Council Tax Support Scheme. Margaret Read added that they also recently had modified the way they verified single person discount and were now using companies that could provide details of the number of adults living in properties.

Members concluded their questioning by enquiring about the time taken to process new benefit claims which was indicated as being red. Margaret stated that in February they had averaged 8.28 days and they were hoping that it would remain at this rate. Cumulatively average processing times remained over target but they were improving. She added that they had been improving since October and that Brent's performance was still in the upper quartile for London. Work was underway to try to achieve the annual target of 8.5 but it may not be achieved. In regards to whether the type of tenancy could delay the claim, it was explained that BHP claims could processed quicker than private tenants as they did not have to validate rental liability for BHP tenants.

RESOLVED:

- (i) Members noted the report.

6. **One Council Programme Update**

Irene Bremang, Programme Management Office Manager, provided Members with an update on the current status of the One Council Programme including detail regarding individual projects. It was explained that since the last update in October 2013 that a further nine projects had been completed and that there were now only four projects that were live. Two of those projects, the One Oracle project and the Working with Families Phase 3 project, were at red status. The One Oracle project had been given red status as they were some risks and issues that still needed to be resolved as Brent were working in partnership with 5 other boroughs. The Working with Families project had progressed to phase 3 after phase 2 had completed in October 2013. Phase 3 was focused on completing the delivery of the Troubled Families initiative. It was rated red as they needed to improve engagement across the partner agencies in Brent and improve levels of outcomes. The Assistant Chief Executive had recently become the Project Sponsor for this project which will help to ensure that these issues were addressed.

Due to only having 4 projects left, the number of risks at a programme level had significantly reduced. The two main programme-level risks were the delivery of additional financial benefits in 2014/15 and partnership engagement. The total number of risks reported by each individual One Council project had also significantly decreased. In September 2013 there were 114 risks across all live projects. This had decreased to 49 reported risks in February 2014 and had decreased further in March 2014. The main type of risk reported related to the

transfer of improvements from the One Council project to the operational team concerned and ensuring that those changes were embedded.

It was noted that the One Council Programme had delivered service improvement, transformations and budget savings in the previous four years. However it was also acknowledged that due to the Council continuing to face a budget deficit that there was a need for a second phase of the One Council Programme. Development of the second phase had already begun and two new projects had been approved. The One Council Programme Board were aware that as the next phase of the Programme was being developed there would have to be considerations given to delivery resources. For example whether it would be sustainable to continue to use internal staff or whether they needed to recruit a dedicated team of project managers.

In terms of governance of the Programme, CMT had acted as the One Council Strategic Programme Board from June 2013 to January 2014 which had provided stability to programme during a time of change in the organisation. The Interim Chief Executive was now the overall Programme Sponsor and the Assistant Chief Executive had assumed the role of Programme Director and the Chair of the One Council Programme Board.

Members were informed of the financial benefits of the Programme thus far. It was highlighted that the estimated savings for 2014/15 was now projected to be £73.4 million which was slightly below the previous estimation of £76.3 million. This was because the One Council Programme Board and Corporate Finance had reviewed each project and adjusted the figures based on what they realistically believed could be achieved. The delivery fund for the programme had reduced to £1.6 million, yet it was likely that this would increase in phase two of the Programme. In regards to the non-financial benefits of the Programme it was noted that a range of non-financial benefits had been realised through various One Council projects.

Irene Bremang concluded by informing Members that the Equality Impact Assessments had been completed at a project level and that at a cumulative level, projects did not detrimentally impact on any one particular group.

During discussion it was confirmed by Ben Spinks that the Council were aware that they needed to find more projects for phase 2 of the One Council Programme. Two new projects had already been confirmed; Brent Passenger Transport Transformation – Phase 1 and the New Accommodation for Independent Living – Phase 1. A list of ideas for potential new projects had been circulated to the Corporate Management Team members to cascade to their departmental Management Teams. It was agreed that when this list was finalised that they would provide the Committee with an update.

RESOLVED:

- (i) Members noted the report.

7. Future Customer Services project

Margaret Read, Operational Director Brent Customer Services, introduced the report which provided a summary of the key deliverables achieved as a result of the

Future of Customer Services Project. The Project had set out to achieve a more strategic approach to ensure that the Council's customer contact resources matched the customer demand. The first objective of the Project was to bring together disparate points of contact into an integrated customer services environment to ensure that most enquires were resolved at first point of contact and that customers were only required to give their information once to avoid duplication and delay. To achieve this objective, they had, amongst a number of other initiatives, reviewed the list of published telephone numbers for the Council and had reduced the number from 154 to 89. They had also reduced the number of published email addresses for services from 95 to 87. They had also consolidated face to face contact into two customer services centre in the Civic Centre and in Willesden. The central call centre was now handling around 25% of all calls coming into the Council and the digital post room was scanning 93% of post. The web team had been brought within Customer Services team and there had been a fundamental review and redesign of the Council's web site. There were new governance arrangements that ensured that the content was displayed in a coherent way and was more user friendly. They recognised that there was still more work to be done to improve the website based on customer feedback.

They had also achieved their second objective to ensure financial savings as they had saved 1.49 million in 2012/13 and 1.64 million in future years. They were continuing to modernise the service further and would provide the committee with an update regarding this in the new financial year.

In response to questions raised by the Committee Margaret Read stated that a number of other boroughs had also recently reworked their website. Therefore Brent had been communicating with them to learn from them what had worked well so they could use this information to inform the Brent access strategy. Margaret Read informed Members that she would let them know whether they should contact the street care team or the contact centre when reporting illegally dumped waste. She added that this was likely to be clarified under the new Public Realm contract but that she would confirm with Members. Members also requested an update on the trade waste arrangements under the new contract. It was confirmed that there were no indirect legal implications arising from the project and that she would provide the Committee with a full copy of the EIA completed in relation to the project. She also stated that she would inform Members how the post room dealt with registered post.

Members were informed that the Customer Services team had learnt a number of lessons regarding customer services arrangements from the Civic Centre that would be put in to practice in the new Willesden Green centre that was scheduled to open in the summer of 2015. For example they would have more self-service computers to ensure that more customers used the online facilities.

RESOLVED:

- (i) Members noted the report.

8. One Council Overview and Scrutiny work programme

9. **Date of next meeting**

10. **Any other urgent business**

Members of the Committee wanted it to be noted that they were disappointed at the absence of any other political party at the meeting and at the lack of attendance of relevant lead members at the Committee over the year.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

J Powney
Chair