



MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **Tuesday, 8 February 2011 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Castle (Chair), Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Beckman, Brown (for Lorber), Hirani (for Chohan), McLennan, Sheth and Van Kalwala

Apologies were received from: Councillors Chohan and Lorber

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 December 2010 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Matters arising

Members received an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 December 2010 which had considered the recommendation from this committee regarding the Adult Social Care Direct services review.

The committee also received further information from the Corporate Complaints Manager relating to the annual complaints report for 2009/10 and the ethnic breakdown of complainants and also of compensation awarded. Councillor Van Kalwala requested further information that could explain why, from the limited monitoring information available, it appeared that of the complaints from young people, 69% of complainants were black or black British.

3. Review of Employee Benefits project

The Remuneration and Performance project had been brought into the One Council Programme renamed as the Rewarding Performance project. The Rewarding Performance project was streamlined into five work streams. Three of the work streams focused on Remuneration and two work streams focused on performance and generic job descriptions. The Rewarding Performance project was reconfigured so that the two non-remuneration work streams became separate HR projects outside of the One Council Programme. The three remaining remuneration work streams now form the 'Review of Employee Benefits' project. Gerri Green (Strategic HR manager) outlined the scope and objectives of the project which involved harmonising London Weighting to national pay levels, determining areas for further overtime control and reduction, reducing spend on allowances (ensuring more consistent terms and conditions) and progress being made in analysis and costings.

Members raised questions on what would be done to effect changes in the event of a lack of support from staff, the overtime culture, whether work could be carried out

in the time available and the impact of the reduction in the overtime budget. Gerri Green responded that major stakeholders would be kept on board and the level of support reviewed. There was no evidence to date of overtime reductions having had an adverse impact on service delivery and work would continue with departments and identify different ways of working. She agreed to write to members with information on the possible impact of the future reductions in overtime payments.

Members also raised questions on progress on reviewing market supplements due to have been completed in November 2010 and were advised that some had been withdrawn, others had ceased in 2010 and still others were due to end in 2011. There had been a nil effect on service delivery and changes would impact on 2011 budgets. On the harmonisation of London Weighting, members heard that the majority of staff had accepted the deal and only 85-90 staff had not accepted the offer. A report would be submitted to the corporate management team and members in due course on options. Gerri Green referred to the possible risks and measures that would be put in place to mitigate involving communication and consultation with staff and emphasising the balance between benefits lost and gained. It was noted that in some areas overtime payment was cost effective and efficient. Members requested further information on overtime figures and the areas involved.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

4. Customer Journey Project

The report before the committee provided an update on the Customer Journey project, and set out further expected progress within the context of other London boroughs and how Brent was performing within a national context.

Alison Elliott (Assistant Director, Community Care) set out the background to the personalisation agenda which was required by the Department of Health consultation paper "Putting People First" (December 2007), progress being made in ensuring improved services with a focus on re-ablement, customer choice and control and the process for assessment. She referred to the resource allocation system to ensure needs were met and the need to ensure accuracy, the delivery of quality services and also to the tight timescales involved. Alison Elliott outlined communications and change management plans indicating that staff had been engaged throughout and feedback was positive. A key objective was to improve performance monitoring and management both locally and against national targets. The measurement of outcomes would be incorporated. She assured that once sufficient data had been collected under the new performance framework, there would be a report back.

On a question on the improving the timescales for carrying out social care assessments, Alison Elliott advised that work was taking place with the one stop shop service on ways of involving senior practitioners at an early stage so that approximately 80% of enquiries were resolved in the early stages and, if eligible, routed into re-ablement within 48 hours. Any further assessment would be carried out by the end of a six week period. Feedback from service users and carers was

positive and they welcomed the provisions for early assessment. On mobility assessment the committee heard that there was a statutory requirement for an annual assessment however in some cases this would take place more frequently. In answer to question on ranking targets, the Assistant Director responded that the service while striving for excellence would be realistic.

On the take up of direct services, Alison Elliott emphasised that the requirement was for clients to be advised of cost of a service. They could then purchase independently or allow the council to put provision in place. In answer to questions on the monitoring of the take up of direct payments, how informed clients and carers were on what was available and how well clients and carers were coping Alison Elliott responded that a directory of providers would be available to help OSS staff give clear information on services. Approximately 500 people were on direct payments and while there was no information on how well they were coping, facilities were in place for them to receive assistance in managing their accounts should they so wish. Questions were raised on the direct services transformation and whether a task group should be established to consider the provision of day centres. The Director of Strategy, Partnership and Improvement reminded members that direct services had already been scrutinised and a decision taken by the Executive. It would be more appropriate for a progress report to be submitted in a say a year's time.

Returning to the customer journey, Alison Elliott set out the savings that should be achieved in reorganising the service and enabling qualified staff to focus on specific areas of work with significant savings also to be achieved by managing demand more effectively. In response to a question on IT support she responded that close working was taking place and the existing system Frameworki was being redesigned to be more in line with practitioners' needs.

The Assistant Director also confirmed that discussions had taken place with trade unions who were also invited to staff meetings.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

5. Future Customer Contact Project

The report from the Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement provided an update on progress with the Future Customer Services project (previously known as Reshaping Customer Contact) which set out to identify opportunities for service improvement and efficiencies in delivering customer contact services.

Toni McConville (Director of Customer and Community Engagement) advised that the emphasis was less on contact and more on service delivery, making engagement easier for customers and minimising the level of 'hand-offs'. The drivers were improved service delivery, preparation for the future move to the new Civic Centre and new ways of working. Jenny Dunne (Project Manager) set out how services were currently delivered and plans in place to address issues. Staff would be more empowered, service accessibility would be increased via the internet and telephone access would be simplified. There were also plans to reduce the number of face to face contact centres to two with three unstaffed locations around the

borough with internet and telephone access. Generalist and specialist teams would be developed and management structures be more consistent and able to manage performance more effectively. Jenny Dunne also drew members' attention to the key risks and set up costs.

On the financial implications, Peter Stachniewski (Head, One Council Programme) referred to the anticipated one off investment of £2.6m and the efforts being made to minimise costs within departments. Annual savings of £3.5m were expected once the new service was fully operational. He acknowledged the risk however a contingency had been built in and progress was being made. Savings had not been assumed for 2011/12 and the situation would be kept under review.

Members questioned whether the planned number of face to face contact centres around the borough was sufficient, particularly for residents in the south of the borough. Members heard that evidence supported the view that residents preferred to travel to main council contact points such as Brent House, by-passing other local facilities, however this would be kept under review. The introduction of telephone contact points was being developed and the experience in other boroughs being taken into account. Similarly, for increasing internet access, each transaction would be subject to a mini business case to test viability. It was agreed that information be provided to Councillor Van Kalwala on the feasibility of a satellite contact point in the Harlesden area.

Members requested information on the number of one stop staff currently employed and how many there were likely to be after the introduction of the proposals. The number of revenues and benefits staff was expected to remain unchanged. The Director of Customer and Community Engagement reminded that the use of specialist and generalist teams would allow for the more effective use of resources. The committee also noted that part of the project was also to reduce avoidable customer contact with revised procedures while empowering staff to make decisions. Targets would focus on contact and resolution, including less tangible targets such as how customers perceive their experience. Jenny Dunne confirmed that monitoring would take into account success and quality and the performance management system would be based around these aims. Members noted that should the projected savings not be realised, other projects would have to come forward to make up any shortfall.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

6. Performance Review Quarter 2

The report from the Directors of Finance and Corporate Services and Strategy Partnership and Improvement set out Brent Council's spending, activity and performance in the second quarter of 2010/11 and highlighted key issues and solutions. It took a corporate overview of financial and service performance and provided an in depth analysis of high and medium risk areas. The report was accompanied by appendices providing budget, activity and performance data for each service area, the Local Area Agreement, ring fenced budgets and the capital programme. Vital Signs trend data and graphs were also provided along with the council's overall budget summary.

Phil Newby (Director, Strategy, Partnership and Improvement) reminded the committee that this would be the last report submitted in the current format and consultation on new indicators was taking place. He pointed out that much of the information in the report was now out of date for example the budget gap referred to had been closed and detailed discussions had already taken place in other scrutiny committees.

The question was raised as to how the target to increase the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting could be achieved in the absence of an adequate collection infrastructure to which the Director responded that agreed changes to refuse collection would dramatically affect recycling and the contract was currently being re-negotiated. In response to a question, Phil Newby outlined the progress of discussion on performance reporting and local indicators. Those to be reported on would include some suggested by service areas and others chosen by the corporate management team bearing in mind national indicators. The suggested number put forward by central government had been considered by London boroughs to be too onerous and dialogue continued. The ideal position would be to identify an agreed set of indicators that was common to other boroughs. The council was already associated with Capital Ambition and PWC's benchmarking. Reference was made to NI 108 improving Key Stage 4 outcomes for Black Caribbean and Somali Boys, plans for improvement and whether there was a direct connection between this target and NI 111 first time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10-17. It was agreed that concerns expressed be conveyed to the task group already considering this matter.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

7. One Council Programme update

Phil Newby (Director, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) and Peter Stachniewski (Head, One Council Programme) introduced the report which outlined progress of the One Council Programme, launched in 2009 and which aimed to fundamentally change the way in which the council carried out its business and achieve efficiency savings. Phil Newby advised that the council was on track to achieve £22m in 2011/12. The first tranche involving the Staffing and Structure Review had already delivered Wave 1 and Wave 2 was in progress. Further adjustments would take place through other projects. Progress was now being made on the review of procurement with more commercially minded discussions taking place with suppliers, and prices and the number of suppliers being reduced. A further report on the property review was due to be while the finance modernisation was complete. Phil Newby also outlined progress on the second tranche of projects which included children's social care and adult social care direct services were also making progress. Peter Stachniewski referred to progress on the income generation/maximisation project and drew attention to the budget report and efforts to deliver savings, most of which had been implemented. Attention was also being given to commercial opportunities. On the third tranche, progress was being made and it was noted that some projects were no longer being taken forward by the programme having been reconfigured or would be delivered within the service area. He emphasised the importance of the Civic Centre project and related activity

around printing, business support and new ways of working. Also, outcomes from the fundamental review of activities had fed into the budget process and more work would be taking place later in the year. Discussions on the scope and objectives of the projects relating to transitions into adult life and special education needs were still taking place.

In response to a question on proposed day centre at John Billam, members were advised that a redesign had been required which had led to a slight delay however the project was now proceeding. Reference was made to views expressed by the Audit Commission which while commending the One Council programme made reference to the tightness of the financial constraints within the council had to operate and the question was raised as to what alternative plans were in place to ensure services were delivered and targets achieved. Peter Stachniewski responded referring to the disciplines associated with the programme and the need to ensure savings were captured, many of which had already been incorporated into service area budgets. He acknowledged that some projects, such as that for procurement, were high risk and these would be prioritised. Others had already delivered, contracts were being renegotiated and robust project management arrangements would be in place to ensure delivery. Staff were being trained, the programme encouraged transparency and additional resources would be committed if necessary. Additionally, new projects would be brought in as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

A CASTLE
Chair