



## **MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** **Tuesday 24 July 2012 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Ketan Sheth (in the Chair) and Councillors Brown, Chohan, Lorber, McLennan and Pavey.

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

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

None made.

### **2. Election of Chair**

RESOLVED:

that in the absence of the Chair, Councillor Sheth be elected chair for the meeting.

### **3. Deputations**

None.

### **4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 June 2012**

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 June 2012 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **5. Matters arising**

None.

### **6. Move to the Civic Centre**

The committee received a presentation from Caroline Raihan (Interim Programme Manager, Move to the Civic Centre) who welcomed the opportunity to update members on progress being made the move to the new Civic Centre scheduled for the forthcoming year. She referred to the intention to minimise disruption to services and outlined the governance arrangements in place for the project. In terms of the One Council programme the project had an amber status and would remain so until the move. Departments were preparing for the move with a 70% reduction in storage space coordinated by departmental move action teams and hot-desking workshops. Business working reviews would be reported to the Corporate Management Team. On IT, changes included digital processing and reviewing cash arrangements. Work was also taking place on new arrangements for customer

services. A project team was considering parking facilities and by October was expected bring forward package of proposals. Improvements to Facilities Management were also in progress. Caroline Raihan set out the timelines for completion and for moving in over weekends in a 12 week period.

Members raised questions on the progress being made on the clear desk policy, 'paperless' offices and the operation of the Civic Hall in particular the extent to which it could continue to be used by community based. Caroline Raihan advised that the clear desk should by now be in operation and it was accepted that 'paper-light' was a more realistic ambition. On the Civic Hall, Caroline Raihan indicated that the intention was for corporate and community use to sit side by side and existing users, in particular Tea Dance attendees, were looking forward to using the new venue. A commercial events manager would be recruited however the Civic Centre would be a community hub. She undertook to send members information on the pricing structure.

Members raised questions on plans to redirect bus routes and heard that some routes had already been redirected and consideration was being given to others. Concern was expressed that Park Lane could be left with inadequate bus service and also whether the planned redirection of bus routes to the new Civic Centre would be sufficient. On parking, the committee heard that there would be some spaces in the basement area for drivers with disabilities and for a car club. The Executive had previously agreed that parking should be chargeable to maintain the business case. Staff would be encouraged not to drive to work on Stadium Event days and members questioned there should be provision for members attending meetings on Stadium Event days. Separate provision for weddings was being considered. On the savings to be made from giving up leases on existing premises, the committee heard that progress was being made and savings were realizable and asked to receive further information in writing.

The committee thanked Caroline Raihan for the update.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

## **7. Housing Needs Transformation project**

The committee received a report from the Director of Regeneration and Major Projects which gave an update on the Housing Needs Transformation Project. Perry Singh (Assistant Director, Housing) reminded the committee of the drivers for the transformation namely welfare reform legislation, the review of customer care provision and also the need to identify savings. The approach was to remove duplication and minimise hand-offs. The committee heard that the revised tenancy strategy had been agreed by the Executive. Perry Singh advised that the restructuring had achieved double the expected level of savings and the extent to which other key objectives had been achieved was not yet known. Of the 28 redundancies, only seven had been compulsory. The RAG status of the project had been Green throughout.

In response to members' questions, Perry Singh confirmed that all of the savings achieved had come from staffing changes and accepted that staffing levels would

have to be revisited should there be a significant increase in the level of complaints over and above the anticipated caseload

Perry Singh confirmed that a comprehensive system of performance measurement was in place and indicated that the numbers in bed and breakfast accommodation had decreased, recently to as low as zero. The full impact of Welfare Reform legislation was unknown and families would have a number of options however an increase in caseload was anticipated.

Cathy Tyson contributed that the Programme Board felt this was a thorough and well managed project which made good use of available systems and processes. Perry Singh confirmed that capacity had been increased as a result of the changes and that the savings from a restructuring of Brent Housing Partnership had not been included.

RESOLVED:-

that the successful implementation of the Housing Needs Transformation Programme be noted.

#### 8. **Performance and finance review quarter 4**

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director, Policy) introduced the joint report from the Directors of Strategy Partnerships and Improvement and Finance and Corporate Services which set out a corporate overview of finance and performance information. She made reference to the fact that some of the figures were indicative and also to some concerns over data for example, in Adult Social Care, connected to IT systems and Frameworki for which additional resources had been introduced. On Children and Families, the position on provision of school places had stabilised and also over costs for foster care placements. On waste collection, the increase in recycling had increased more significantly than it appeared however more work was required on public realm management for example, fly tipping. On Regeneration and Major Projects, significant events were due to commence providing additional opportunities. Local people's access to employment continued to be an issue. In the light of overspending at the end of the previous financial year there was a high level of scrutiny to ensure a sound financial position and the protection of services. Cathy Tyson was pleased to report that the council had been ranked as the best in London in assessing housing benefit claims. Additionally, changes to complaints management had led to fewer complaints and was more efficient.

On the Performance Review report, members raised questions on spending pressures on placement and safeguarding budgets which have had to be subsidised by Children's Centres. These were said to be difficult to forecast but early monitoring and preparations would be taking place from the first quarter. Members also raised the question of de-commissioning health services and Cathy Tyson advised that there were on-going, regular discussions between council officers and NHS colleagues over the transfer of public health and the integration of health and social care.

Problems relating to street cleaning were again raised evidenced by complaints. Cathy Tyson advised that requirement for residential streets to be cleaned at least once a week was part of on-going dialogue with the contractor and checks were

being made. Members specifically referred to NI 95a (% of Streets below standard for litter) performance on which (9%) appeared to be poorer than previously indicated and requested that thorough cleans be carried out. On council delays in making payments, members raised questions on the adverse impact on partners and were advised that information on the extent of this was available from invoices. It was agreed that an exercise be carried out and reported back. Members noted that funding had been received for employment initiatives (£3M) and requested information on the cost of employing a consultant to carry out the work. Members expressed concern over the data quality for Adult Social Care indicators and also the number of planning applications processed within 13 weeks which, at 41%, was significantly below target.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the finance and performance information contained in the joint report from the Directors of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement and Finance and Corporate Services be noted and remedial actions taken as necessary;
- (ii) that the current and future strategic risks associated with the information provided be noted and remedial action taken as appropriate.

**9. One Council Overview and Scrutiny work programme**

Members asked for an officer to attend to give an update on the integration of public health and for Chris Whyte to circulate a note on steps to be taken to address and improve on-going street cleaning problems in the interim period before the new contract comes into force. An update from Chris Whyte on the waste contract was added to the programme for December 2012.

**10. Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Ketan Sheth  
Chair