

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 27 May 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Jamie Milne (Chair), Mark Ingleby (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Chris Barnham, Maja Hilton, Ami Ibitson, Helen Klier and Crada Onuegbu

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jim Mallory

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Kevin Bonavia (Cabinet Member Resources), Conrad Chambers (Service Manager IT Strategy and Development), Duncan Dewhurst (Head of Service Change and Technology), Georgina Nunney (Principal Lawyer), Justine Roberts (Change and Innovation Manager), Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director for Customer Services) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2015

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 14th April 2015 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. No Recourse to Public Funds - response to recommendations

3.1 Justine Roberts, Change and Innovation Manager, presented this report to the committee and highlighted the following key points:

- The report included the full report which went to Mayor and Cabinet on the 13th May and, in addition to responding to the recommendations from the Public Accounts Select Committee, it explained the Council's current and previous approaches to dealing with applications for support from families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).
- The report also recommended extending the pilot programme for an additional year and this was approved by the Mayor.
- The team had been successful in getting access to benefits to 94 of the families it had been working with.
- The Committee was provided with the following additional information with respect to the recommendation from its NRPF in-depth review requesting immediate referral to Mayor and Cabinet at the turn of the new financial year in all cases where an area of spending doubles in the space of one financial year:
 - The Council's budget is monitored on a regular basis and financial forecast reports are presented to the Executive Management Team on a monthly basis and quarterly/ 3 times

per year to Public Accounts Committee and Mayor & Cabinet. The mechanism will ensure that significant variations in projected spend from the set budget are identified early and can be reported upon in a timely manner with appropriate management actions taken.

3.2 In the discussion that followed the following key points were made:

- It was important that the Mayor of Lewisham wrote to the Home Secretary as requested in the original recommendation from the Committee.
- Lewisham had been working closely with neighbouring boroughs to share learning from the first phase of the pilot and Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth and Southwark were now working together with Lewisham on a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) counter fraud project focused on NRPF cases.
- This partnership working would help to ensure that standards were consistent and fair and information was effectively shared.
- An additional document had been tabled at Mayor and Cabinet listing officer responses to submissions by Project 17 to Mayor and Cabinet. This document was available on the Council website and would be circulated to Committee Members.

RESOLVED:

That the response to the Select Committee's recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet be noted.

4. ICT Strategy

4.1 Kevin Bonavia, Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the item and outlined the importance of the Council's IT strategy and a robust IT system for the Council, highlighting that the current IT infrastructure needed improving and options for this needed to be considered.

4.2 Duncan Dewhurst, Head of Technology and Change, and Conrad Chambers, IT Strategy Manager presented the report to Committee and gave a demonstration of the functionality of proposed improved technology. In the discussion that followed the following key points were raised:

- Currently IT was restricting change and slowing improvements and efficiencies. IT needed to become the driver for change.
- There needed to be better use of systems and data.
- Improving the infrastructure ensuring there was capacity for a modern and flexible system and increasing the capacity for mobile and flexible working was important.
- The current contract was finishing in April 2016 and options needed to be considered to ensure that the Council had the best value for money and an improved service.

- There needed to be a stronger emphasis on less paper and Councillors would need the capacity to do more of their committee work on tablets or other devices without the need for printed papers.
- A new, improved and more secure network could give additional security allowing for increased remote working.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

5. Select Committee work programme

5.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report to the committee; asked for comments; and asked Members to specify any additional details or analysis required for the items scheduled for the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report and work programme be noted.

6. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

6.1 There were no referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

Chair:

Date:
