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MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE LONDON BOROUGHS OF LEWISHAM AND BRENT

Held on Thursday 27 October 2016 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors McLennan (Chair, London Borough of Brent), Bonavia (Vice-Chair, London Borough of Lewisham) and Butt (London Borough of Brent)

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor Dromey (London Borough of Lewisham)

1. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

2. Positions of Joint Committee Chair and Vice Chair

The Committee agreed that Councillor McLennan be appointed as Chair and Councillor Bonavia be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee of the London Boroughs of Lewisham and Brent for the remainder of the current municipal year.

3. Report to the ICT Shared Service Joint Committee

Sally Chin (Head of Programmes and Budget Management, Brent Council) introduced the report which provided a comprehensive update to the Committee on the progress of the shared Brent and Lewisham IT service (in effect since April 2016). She gave a brief overview of the original aims for the shared service in that it would be high performing, customer focused and cost effective. It was mentioned that the savings targets for both Councils this year were likely to be met.

The Committee heard that the key areas of progress since the shared service became active was the completion of the desktop roll out and completion of priority services being migrated to the new infrastructure in Lewisham. Sally Chin outlined a key challenge to note had been moving all of Lewisham's services to the new servers. She stated that this was largely because of a lack of investment in Lewisham IT services and that much of its technology was out of date. The example was given that the servers dated back to 2003 and this posed inevitable problems of transferring to more modern systems. She outlined that whilst there had been welcomed progress, estimated at 75 percent complete, the completion date was now likely to be April 2017 rather than October 2016.

In relation to these problems, Members questioned whether additional resources would assist the delivery of migrating the remaining services and whether the delay

would cause any adverse financial or operational effects. Sally Chin felt that extra resources would not necessarily aid the speed of the process as it depended more on the quality and availability of staff who were able to implement this type of system. She estimated that the delay of completion would cost the service around £30,000. Peter Gadsdon (Director of Performance, Partnerships and Policy, Brent Council) highlighted that whilst this element of the shared service was taking longer than planned, it was notable that it was due to be achieved in a much shorter timeframe than the comparable update process had taken Brent in the years prior. Kevin Sheehan (Executive Director of Customer Services, Lewisham Council) added that this had shown the benefit of cooperation as Lewisham had taken advice and learnt from some of the problems Brent previously encountered when upgrading its IT infrastructure.

Sally Chin also highlighted that there had been problems with the split ServiceDesk, as specified in report. She did point out to the Committee that the changes which had been implemented to address this, such as a centralised service desk and both service desk staff teams being moved to Brent, had shown promising initial improvement. Members asked for further detail on the staff numbers based at each Council and whether there was staff available on site at Lewisham. Sally Chin stated that there were 50 posts established at Brent and 1 at Lewisham (not including Application Support Teams). On average 6 are based in Lewisham at any one time. Peter Gadsdon stated that as Lewisham had moved straight to a cloud version of the Hornbill service desk software, whereas Brent were on an on premise version which meant that the engineers were having to access separate systems. The work to put Brent on the Cloud version had been completed in September which has helped with service desk move to Brent as the system could be operated remotely from one place. He specified that this had aided efficiency as it meant that there was no need for extra engineers for different systems. He explained that there was however still a number of engineers based at Lewisham for on-site issues which arose.

The Committee heard that following the exit from Lewisham's Capita contract a number of staff have transferred to Brent. Following this, a restructure had taken place to create a single shared service team that had been completed in October 2016. Sally Chin noted that recruitment to fill the vacancies mentioned in the report would hopefully be completed by the end of year.

In addition, Sally Chin informed Members that both Councils were considering whether it would be beneficial to expand the shared service to include the Councils' application support teams. Work on this was ongoing would and would be subject to decisions by the respective Councils.

In more comprehensive discussions about the budget positions, Sally Chin advised that, as set out in her introduction, the saving targets of both Council's for this year had both been met. For Brent this had meant a saving of £1.62million for 2016/2017. For Lewisham, this had meant a saving of £1million for 2016/2017. She noted that there were ambitious targets for new income streams for the shared service moving forward. Members welcomed the successful savings across both Councils.

Discussions moved to the figures set out in the shared services performance pack (Appendix 2 to the report). Sally Chin highlighted to Members that most of the key

business plan objectives had been completed, which emphasised the positive progress made. The pack also showed the risks which had been identified, but the mitigation plans ensured that these continued to be managed appropriately. Questions arose about the risk of Lewisham's resilience not being at the same level as that of Brent and what Lewisham's IT capability would be in the event having to evacuate or close its Town Hall building. Duncan Dewhurst (Head of Technology & Change, Lewisham Council) stated that Lewisham's capabilities would be covered in this regard, with a new set up in place which allowed the majority of staff members to work remotely from home. For those Lewisham staff members not set up with home working capabilities, it was proposed that Lewisham undertake a similar initiative to Brent's 'Genius Bar' IT drop in session. This was an initiative which had been utilised when Brent moved to its new Civic Centre building for staff to drop in and have their IT devices set up for home working by Brent's in house IT staff.

The Committee also considered the service desk Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the performance pack. One Member commented that Lewisham appeared to be lagging behind Brent's performance figures and whether it was both the transitional problems and application support restructure which had caused this. Officers agreed with this analysis as being part of the cause and that they were continuing to monitor KPI progress. Peter Gadsdon added that 20 would typically be considered as a good net promoter score and therefore both Lewisham and Brent's figures were pleasing. He commented that what the figures had highlighted was that staff within the each Council were happy with the level of service they received but that it took longer than had been hoped for IT staff to answer calls when a problem was logged. It was noted that the long term aim would be to keep the level of service quality high, whilst simultaneously improving the speed at which IT calls were addressed and then resolved. The Chair commented that it would be interesting to see an updated set of figures up to and around the busy Christmas period as a benchmark for how the service was continuing to progress.

There was a brief discussion on whether the IT equipment was uniform across both Councils and what the contractual process for upgrading equipment such as staff iPads and iPhones would be. Peter Gadsdon stated that the equipment was uniform and that upgrading the equipment would be a matter for each Council to address.

Members present concluded that they were very happy with the progress being made with the shared service and there were no related issues which needed to be taken to their respective Cabinets at this time. It was also mentioned to assess the possibility of conducting future meetings via skype and streamed via the internet.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Business Plan, as set out in Section 1 and Appendix 1 of the report be noted;
- (ii) The actions being taken to bring Lewisham infrastructure in line with that of Brent's be noted;
- (iii) The contents of the Performance Pack, as set out in Section 3 and Appendix 2 of the report be noted;

- (iv) The current budget position, as set out in Section 4 of the report be noted; and
- (v) The viability of conducting future Joint Committee meetings via skype and streamed via the internet be considered.

4. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was no other urgent business to be transacted.

The meeting was declared closed at 7.06 pm

COUNCILLOR MARGARET MCLENNAN
Chair