

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in Chamber Suites 1 and 2, The Arc, Clowne on Monday 16th November 2015 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor R.J. Bowler in the Chair

Councillors P.M. Bowmer, C.P. Cooper, M.G. Crane, R. Heffer, A. Joesbury, D. McGregor, J.E. Smith, E. Stevenson and R. Turner.

Also in attendance were Councillors T. Connerton (Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Revenues & Benefits) (until Minute No. 0534) and M.J. Ritchie (Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT) (from Minute No. 0532)

Officers:-

K. Drury (Information Engagement & Performance Manager) (until Minute No. 0533), P. Campbell (Assistant Director – Community Safety and Housing (BDC)) (from Minute No. 0534), D. Bonsor (Housing Needs Manager) (from Minute No. 0534), P. Coogan (Housing Innovation Officer) (from Minute No. 0534), C. Millington (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Brownsword (Governance Officer)

0527. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

0528. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0529. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

0530. MINUTES – 19TH OCTOBER 2015

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 19th October be approved as a true and correct record.

0531. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Members considered the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document.

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

Councillor M.J. Ritchie entered the meeting.

0532. CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2015 (Q2 – 2015/16)

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager presented the report which gave information on the quarter 2 outturns for the Corporate Plan 2015-2019 targets. The information was correct as of 30th October 2015. Most of the targets were on track.

C09 – Process changes to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support within an average of 14 days

The department was proposing to reduce the target to 10 days, as they were currently operating under the proposed new target.

C10 – Carry out 300 disability adaptations to Council houses each year

A discussion took place regarding whether the figure was too high and whether there was sufficient budget available. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

the works were part funded by DCC and the target included works such as installing handrails as well as full adaptations.

It was confirmed that adaptations were not removed if the property was relet.

C12 – Ensure a minimum of 50% of clients experiencing domestic violence each year are satisfied with the support they receive

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT explained that the Freedom Project ran courses which aimed to give victims of domestic abuse confidence and self esteem. The project had been very successful.

C13 – Reduce average relet times of Council properties (not including sheltered accommodation) to 20 days by March 2019

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that due to a more flexible way of working, the target was currently performing well. A discussion took place regarding reporting of information regarding sheltered accommodation. The Information Engagement & Performance Manager noted that figures including sheltered accommodation were included within the report.

C16 – Agree a project with Derbyshire County Council and other stock retaining authorities to deliver alarm monitoring to 12,000 people countywide by April 2016

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that due to Derbyshire County Council withdrawing support from the project, the target would not be met by the Council. A new monitoring system was to be introduced and the Corporate Plan Target would be changed.

T05 – Initiate a build programme for the new Clowne leisure facility by 2015 and complete by 2016

It was noted that the project was due to start imminently.

T06 – Introduce alternate uses to 20% of garage sites owned by the Council by March 2019

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that sites that were suitable for building had been identified and a full survey had been carried out of all HRA land.

T08 – Fully deliver the electoral changes to District and Parish wards as a result of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review by 1st December 2018

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that although the work had not yet begun, a meeting had been arranged by the Boundary Commission for England in the New Year.

T09 – Reduce the percentage of rent arrears by 10% through early intervention and effective monitoring by 2019

Members expressed their concerns regarding whether the target could be met.

T10 – Reduce the level of Former Tenants Arrears by 10% through early intervention and effective monitoring by 2019

Members expressed their concerns regarding the level of write-offs to help meet the target. It was noted that writing off debt was an accepted financial accounting tool and did not mean that the debts could not be recovered in the future.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor M.G. Crane
RESOLVED that early progress against the Corporate Plan 2015-2019 targets be noted.

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager left the meeting.

0533. UPDATE ON THE HOUSING WORKING GROUP

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT noted that a report was to be taken to the Executive on 30th November 2015.

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services left the meeting.

The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC), the Housing Needs Officer and the Housing Innovation Manager entered the meeting.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

0534. REVIEW OF CHOICE BASED LETTINGS – REVISED HOUSING APPLICATION FORM

The draft revised form and guidance notes were circulated.

The Housing Innovation Officer explained the changes to Members. It was noted that every applicant would be asked to provide references and extra detail in the proof of address page.

Further detail was requested in the current address section. Questions were added regarding Universal Credit which was to be introduced in November. There were also questions regarding key workers and armed forces.

Members felt that the armed forces section needed highlighting and asked how the list of key workers had been defined. The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) noted that the list was still draft and could be added to, key workers could also include those who worked for certain employers. Members felt that the form needed to be clear that it was only key workers who currently resided outside the District who would be awarded key worker points.

A discussion took place regarding whether notes should be added to the application form or added to the guidance document.

More space was included to provide all addresses lived in for the past 10 years and a discussion took place regarding the equalities monitoring form. It was noted that the equalities monitoring form was the corporate form and used the census categories.

It was noted that the final version of the form would not be available until after the Government's Autumn Statement, as there may be some impact on housing guidance.

Members opinion was also sought regarding the design of the form and guidance document.

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith

RESOLVED that any comments on the form or design be forwarded to the Scrutiny Officer by noon on 27th November 2015.

(Scrutiny Officer)

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

0535. WORK PLAN

The Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee Work Plan was circulated for Members information.

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The formal meeting concluded at 1150 hours and members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 1200 hours.