

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 The Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday 25th July 2016 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor R. Bowler in the Chair

Councillors P.M. Bowler, M.G. Crane, R.A. Heffer, A. Joesbury, D. McGregor and J.E. Smith

Also in attendance were Councillors T. Connerton (Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Revenues & Benefits) (until Minute No. 00198), M. Dooley (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Plan, HR and Leisure) (until Minute No. 00197) and M.J. Ritchie (Portfolio Holder for Housing and IT).

Members:-

J. Foley (Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement) (until Minute No. 00198) P. Campbell (Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC)), K. Drury (Information Engagement & Performance Manager) (until Minute No. 00197), A. Donohoe (Customer Contact Manager) (until Minute No. 00198), C. Millington (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Brownsword (Senior Governance Officer)

00192. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C.P. Cooper, E. Stevenson and R.Turner.

00193. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business

00194. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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00195. MINUTES – 27TH JUNE 2016

Moved by Councillor R.A. Heffer and seconded by Councillor D. McGregor

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 27th June 2016 be approved as a true and correct record.

00196. CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – APRIL TO JUNE 2016 (Q1 – 2016/17)

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager presented the report which gave details of the performance outturn for those targets which sit under 'providing our customers with excellent service' and 'transforming our organisation' aims as of 30th June 2016. The information was correct as of 14th July 2016. Most of the targets were on track.

Aim – Providing our Customers with Excellent Customer Service

C 03 – Achieve an overall biennial external satisfaction rate of 80% or above for leisure, recreation and cultural activities and services

It was noted that figures would be available in Q2.

C 06 - Prevent homelessness for more than 50% of people who are facing homelessness each year

It was noted that 57% of cases were prevented and a question was asked about the remaining 43%. The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) noted that not all homelessness cases could be prevented.

C 08 - Process all new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims within an average of 20 days

C 09 – Process changes to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support within an average of 10 days

It was noted that figures would be available in Q2.

C 13 – Reduce average relet times of Council properties (not including sheltered accommodation) to 20 days by March 2019

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager noted that the average relet time was currently 24.5 days.

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Aim – Transforming our Organisation

T 07 – Produce a Procurement Strategy by September 2016

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager noted that a further extension had been requested until the end of November and that this would be recommended to Executive on 5th September 2016. The narrative noted the revised timetable for the Procurement Strategy.

T 12 – Develop a series of strategies and plans to support the ambition of a sustainable leisure service by March 2017

On track noting extension previously approved by Executive.

T 13 – Increase on-line self service transactions dealt with by the Contract Centre by 20% each year

A question was asked regarding a problem with flytipping and the Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement noted that further information would be provided to Members.

It was noted that it was likely that this target would be exceeded for 2016/17.

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith
RESOLVED that progress against the Corporate Plan 2015-2019 targets be noted.

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager left the meeting.

00197. UPDATE ON THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

Moved by Councillor R. Bowler and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith
RESOLVED that the Transformation Programme Update be deferred to take into account the end of year figures.

00198. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE AUTOMATED CASH PAYMENT MACHINES (REVISITING THE RECOMMENDATION MADE IN RELATION TO THE REVIEW OF THE *IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON THE CONTACT CENTRES - 2014*)

The Assistant Director – Customer Service and Transformation and the Customer Contact Manager gave an update on the automated payment machines and noted

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that although there were only 10 months of data available, the Council had seen an 17.7% increase in Direct Debits and cash payments to the Council had reduced by 20%. Only 2 formal complaints had been received and overall customer satisfaction in the Contact Centres had increased.

The addition of the payment machines had also freed up staff to be available to answer telephone queries and the telephone statistics showed a marked increase in calls answered within the Council's target time.

Improvements had been made over time to reduce keying in times and the step by step guide was being translated into other languages. The machines would need to be updated to take into account the change to polymer bank notes.

Any service could be paid for at the machines by cash, debit card or cheque. The possibility of credit card payments for business use e.g. licensing applications or planning applications needed to be investigated. The continuing ability to pay by cheque also needed to be investigated, due to cost.

Members noted the success of the payment machines. Concerns were expressed by Members regarding the possibility of phasing out cheque and Postal Order payments, as some customers still pay in this way.

Concerns were also expressed regarding the length of time taken to make cash payments at the machines and the Assistant Director – Customer Service and Transformation noted that whilst the machines were the most up to date available, each note had to be checked by the machine for fraud.

Members were pleased to note the overall success of the machines and felt that the issue of cheque and credit card payments needed to be seriously considered. A question was asked about whether the Council should look at utilising services such as PayPoint. The Assistant Director – Customer Service and Transformation felt that the time had come to look at all payment methods again.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Revenues & Benefits noted that the public had handled the change very well and it was a diminishing population who did not use debit cards.

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

RESOLVED that the Executive be requested to look at all payment methods to the Council.

(Customer Services and Revenues & Benefits/Scrutiny Officer)

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The Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement and the Customer Contact Manager left the meeting.

00199. B@HOME – LOCAL LETTING POLICY

The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) presented the report which requested the view of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee on the introduction of a local letting policy for new council properties developed under the B@Home project and was designed to help to create a balanced community with a range of people from different backgrounds, with different ages and abilities. The current policy was more designed towards letting empty properties within an estate rather than a whole new estate.

Members expressed concerns regarding altering the existing policy or creating a new one and felt that potential tenants should be treated on the basis of housing need.

Moved by Councillor M.G. Crane and seconded by Councillor D. McGregor

RESOLVED that the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee do not support the introduction of a local letting policy for new council properties developed under the B@Home project.

(Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC)/
Scrutiny Officer)

00200. WORK PLAN

The Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee Work Plan was circulated for Members' information. The Scrutiny Officer noted that the Procurement Strategy would now be on the agenda for the meeting to be held on 17th October 2016, along with the results of the Employee Survey.

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The formal meeting concluded at 1136 hours and members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 1239 hours.