

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 17th June 2019 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

Councillors Allan Bailey, Jayne Bryson, Paul Cooper (left during Minute No. 0072), David Dixon, Ray Heffer and Rita Turner.

Officers:- Kath Drury (Information, Engagement and Performance Manager), Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer) and Alison Bluff (Governance Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor Andrew Joesbury (observing).

0065. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Dexter Bullock, Anne Clarke and Patricia Clough.

0066. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

0067. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

0068. MINUTES – 25th MARCH 2019

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25th March 2019 be approved as a correct record.

0069. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Committee considered the current List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

0070. CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – JANUARY 2019 TO MARCH 2019 (QUARTER 4)

Committee considered the Quarter 4 (January 2019 to March 2019) performance outturn for Corporate Plan targets, which sat under the 'Providing our customers with excellent service' and 'Transforming our organisation' aims as of 31st March 2019. (Information compiled on 31st May 2019).

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager noted that this report would be the final quarter four report for the performance indicators which made reference to the original Corporate Plan 2015-2019. As this was a transitional year, a suite of indicators would be rolled over for the current financial year and the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager would continue to report outcomes to Members. A new Corporate Plan would be put together during 2019 which would be subject to Member and public consultation.

Providing our Customers with Excellent Service

Out of the 16 targets (2 targets had been previously withdrawn; C16 and C04), 14 had been achieved and 2 targets, C13 - *Reduce average relet times of Council properties (not including sheltered accommodation) to 20 days by March 2019* and C14 - *Attend 99% of repair emergencies within 6 working hours*, had been marked as failed as they had not achieved their intended outcomes by March 2019.

With regard to the two failed targets above, queries had been raised at the Scrutiny pre meeting by the Chair and Vice Chair and responses to those queries were circulated at the meeting as follows;

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

Having submitted a report from the Committee to Executive in April 2019, raising our concerns over poor performance, could officers please clarify the action being taken post-election?

Observation: While the commentary is always clear about what is 'not counted' within the target (usually a large part of the commentary), this update has no detail on the activity that has taken place over Q4 to turnaround performance for the properties that are 'counted'.

Officer response;

Key points below from the 2017/18 Housing Voids Review which was undertaken by the Housing Department and the Portfolio Holder plus two other Elected Members. These have been implemented during the 2018/19 period.

Although the Voids Review wasn't a formal Scrutiny Review, key Elected Members were involved fully in the process and the officers involved would welcome the opportunity to present the findings of the review to wider members.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- *Void processes reviewed and amended to ensure efficient and effective void management. This included updating the forms utilised throughout the process.*
- *Void Task Group formed to review current voids. This includes strategic options for major works / remodelling, and disposal / redevelopment.*
- *Void property gardens to be cleared and maintained throughout void period.*
- *Void property marketing improved by use of 'to let' estate agent type boards and promotion on social media.*
- *Bolsover Lettable Standard reviewed and amended to ensure homes meet modern standards.*
- *Property Change Control Sheet introduced to manage / monitor void properties that are not available to let for management reasons (reviewed and agreed in HSMG).*

The review process included a great deal of shadowing amongst the housing team which had resulted in a 'one team' approach to voids throughout the full process (termination to letting)

The Housing Team continued to manage void properties in a proactive, efficient manner following the Housing Void Review (2017/18). The newly established Void Task Group actively reviewed any low demand properties with a view to successful allocation and letting. If such a property was identified the task group would utilise one or more of the tools identified above. This may be the use of "to let" boards in some cases or looking at the property layout if this had been identified by prospective tenants as an issue, or it could also be some decoration if this was a barrier to letting.

It was intended to fully review the target during 2019 ready for the introduction of the new Corporate Plan. This would ensure that the target was transparent, meaningful and provided Members with the information they need, not only for the turnaround times of voids but with more information about voids and the voids process. During 2019, the team would be researching best practice in regard to void reporting/benchmarking so progress could be meaningfully compared and measured.

Committee expressed their disappointment at the underperformance against the target leading to failure of the target. Members agreed that a representative from the Housing Management Team be invited to a future meeting to answer Members questions with regard to the issues in relation to relet times for void properties.

C14 - Attend 99% of emergency repairs within 6 working hours;

(Initial query identified was): Is this target to be revised for 2019/20 so we can show realistic performance?

However, Members were advised that the Target wording had now been amended to: **'Attend 99% of repair emergencies within 6 working hours'**. Therefore, officers were asked to clarify if the calculation methodology had been improved in respect of measuring time taken where a call spanned over 2 days?

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members were concerned that a situation would remain of a status of 'failing,' which misrepresented actual performance, where the emergency call logs at the end of a working day – as per previous detail supplied by the service.

Officer response;

The lead officer would be asking for this target to be reduced to 98% when updating on Q1 2019/20 performance as the 99% target was not realistic.

The original target of 99% was set with consideration for being monitored from its inception to see if it was achievable. The target was changed to "attend" within 6 hours as it was more attainable (Executive 13/06/16).

Housing Repairs had set a cut off period for attending some emergencies by 1pm the same day due to resource issues, e.g., insufficient time to attend within a standard working day before the out of hours service kicked in.

A 98% target would allow for these 'late' emergencies to be attended to beyond the 6 hours (and still within the main emergency target time of 24hrs). Any emergencies which could not be attended to the same day, i.e., after 1pm, were all scrutinised and the high risk ones passed to the 'out of hours' service for attendance that day. The low risk ones were attended to the following morning by the regular repairs team.

In response to a suggestion that the target be separated into two parts, i.e., a target for emergencies received before 1pm and a target for after 1pm, the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager advised Members that this target was in relation to emergencies reported during office hours, i.e., when the contact centres were open. Out of office emergencies were not subject to this target.

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager provided outturn figures from 2018/19, where 3,307 (98%) emergencies received before 1pm, were attended to within 6 hours and 83 received (for the whole year), after 1pm and assessed as low risk, were attended to the following morning. This provided an example of scale and the amount of resources which would be required to measure the smaller number of emergencies received after 1pm. The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager added that the 1pm cut off allowed the target to be measured straight forwardly.

Transforming our Organisation

Out of the 14 targets in total, (2 had been previously withdrawn; T01 and T14), 8 had been achieved and 2 targets, T09 - *Reduce the percentage of rent arrears by 10% through early invention and effective monitoring by 2019* and T13 - *Increase on-line self-service transactions dealt with by the Contact Centre by 20% each year*, had been marked as failed as they had not achieved their intended outcomes by March 2019

With regard to the two failed targets above, queries had been raised at the Scrutiny pre meeting by the Chair and Vice Chair and responses to those queries were circulated at the meeting as follows;

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

What will the Council's target be for this going forward in to 2019/2020?

Observation: The commentary does not incorporate any explanation for the activity at service level (or indeed any external factors beyond our control) and how this has led to non-achievement of this target. It simply states the outturn and calculation method. This is not sufficient for Members to judge that the Council is in fact using 'early intervention and effective monitoring'.

Officer response;

The target would be looked at during 2019 with a view to establishing a transparent meaningful target which would provide Members with information about performance on collecting rent arrears.

The rent arrears process was being reviewed and a draft Policy and procedure had been developed. Compliance with the pre-action protocol for possession claims by social landlords had been ensured by working closely with the Legal Department. Standard letters had been reviewed and amended to make the arrears process as robust as possible.

A recent Rent Audit had made a recommendation that reporting in 'Perform' should be reviewed to demonstrate clarity and transparency which were fundamental factors in ensuring that the overall position was reconcilable to system report totals and measurable against performance targets. However, this still resulted in a "Substantial Assurance" from the Audit for the Rent Section. This new target would be implemented with the new Corporate Plan.

The Housing Enforcement Section would be taking a variety of actions to tackle rent arrears. These included, telephone calls, visits, arrangements with the tenants, joint visits with support agencies, referrals to our own Money Advice Worker and other support agencies and ultimately court action if appropriate. The emphasis was always on early intervention and the review of the process had focused on this.

In response to a Member's query, the Information, Engagement and Performance Manager advised the meeting that the Joint Strategic Director – Place was liaising with Housing Service Managers in the development of a new Corporate Plan target for the reduction of tenant rent arrears.

Members also noted that the Portfolio Holder for Housing be invited to attend future Scrutiny's meetings when the Performance Reports were presented to Committee.

T13 - Increase on-line self-service transactions dealt with by the Contact Centre by 20% each year;

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager advised the meeting that the Head of Service and the Contact Centre Manager were keen to keep this target at 20% for the new Corporate Plan as more of the Council's information and services needed to

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

be available on line so customers had more choice and could carry out more service transactions on line.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer

RESOLVED that (1) the Quarter 4 (January 2019 to March 2019) performance outturns for Corporate Plan targets under the remit of the Committee be noted,

(2) a representative from the Housing Management Team be invited to a future meeting to answer Members questions with regard to the issues in relation to relet times for void properties.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager left the meeting.

0071. REVIEW OF DISABILITY ADAPTATIONS TO COUNCIL PROPERTIES – POST SCRUTINY MONITORING (FINAL REPORT)

Committee considered a report which presented the final post scrutiny monitoring on their Review of Disability Adaptations to Council Properties.

During 2017/18, the Committee scrutinised the Council's performance on providing disabled adaptations to Council properties, including whether the Council worked efficiently to provide what disabled residents needed, that it was able to carry out as many adaptations as possible each year within the allocated budget and whether the Authority continued to receive value for money.

The report acknowledged the progress across the 12 month post-scrutiny monitoring period by the service delivering the Corporate Plan Target C10 – *Carry out 300 disability adaptations to Council properties each year.*

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer drew Members attention to the officer comment in Appendix 2 to the report, which stated that the disability adaptation process continued to work well with excellent customer satisfaction and spend within the £120k budget as set out each year. However, demand for major adaptations, especially wet rooms, continued to increase year on year.

The Corporate Plan Target C10, for 2019/20, would remain at 300 adaptations each year whilst the revised Corporate Plan for 2020 onwards was produced.

In response to a Member's question, the Scrutiny and Elections Officer replied that the 300 adaptation target had been devised from the average number of adaptations carried out in previous years. However, the figure would need to be spotlighted in future in line with the trend for the ageing population.

Members requested that the Scrutiny & Elections Officer query the trend for the ageing population and if the Council's budget would follow the trend and advise Committee at a future meeting.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rose Bowler

RESOLVED that (1) the progress against the review recommendation be noted,

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(2) the findings of the Review be made public in accordance with Part 4.5.17(3) of the Council's Constitution,

(3) the Scrutiny & Elections Officer query the trend for the ageing population and if the Council's budget would follow the trend and advise Committee at a future meeting.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

0072. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Committee considered their Work Programme for 2019/2020.

A Member noted that a meeting on the Work Programme was scheduled for 17th July 2019 but should be 15th July 2019.

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer requested approval from Committee for a meeting scheduled on 2nd September 2019 to be rearranged for 9th September 2019.

Topics for Review

3 areas had been suggested for review by the Committee at the Annual Scrutiny Conference. These were;

- Review of Discretionary Rate Relief
- Review of Relet times of Council properties
- Review of the accessibility of the Council's website

- Review of Discretionary Rate Relief;

This had been rolled over from the list of topics identified at the 2018 Scrutiny Conference. It had been suggested that this could be undertaken as a mini review by the Committee to ensure that Members were happy with the current process/procedures which were in place as currently new requests were reviewed by an Officer/Member group.

Members chose not to discuss this topic further at this time, as additional information was pending from officers.

- Review of Relet times of Council Properties;

Throughout 2018/19, Committee had raised their concern with regard to underperformance against Target C13 - *Reduce average relet times of Council properties (not including sheltered accommodation) to 20 days by March 2019.* Committee considered this to be a high priority issue.

To provide some background information for newly elected Member's, the Scrutiny & Elections Officer circulated a summary of Members' queries and officers' feedback from during 2017/18 and also a copy of a Minute extract from a Scrutiny meeting held in February 2019 with regard to queries raised by the Chair and Vice Chair in relation to quarter 3 performance and the responses received from officers.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Minute extract included a resolution that Committee's concern with regard to a lack of action on achieving Target C13 be referred to the Executive and the Scrutiny & Elections Officer and the Chair and Vice Chair had attended the April 2019 Executive meeting to put forward Committee's concerns, including Members ideas for further action.

Since the Executive meeting had taken place, officers had met with the relevant Cabinet Members as part of a task and finish group to look at housing policies and voids etc. This work was ongoing and would be resumed now the new Cabinet and portfolio holders were in place.

In relation to hard to let properties, at the Scrutiny Conference, Members had also queried how the Council was supporting access to housing for priority groups, particularly Ex-servicemen (this supported the Armed Forces Covenant); and Young Care Leavers and how the Council could improve partnership working in this area. Could 'Hard-to-Let' properties be used as part of a partnership approach for these priority customer groups?

Members felt that this would be a good review for the Committee to undertake. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer noted that the Committee would need to consider the issue of performance and turnaround of the Council's void properties and also how the Council's reletting policy supported these groups as part of a review. A list of current void properties would be required to form part of the scope of the review.

A further separate discussion also took place regarding the current refurbishment of New Bolsover Model Village, with Members raising a number of concerns in relation to customer satisfaction and expectations, delays in completion and communication with Members. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer agreed to invite a relevant Housing Officer to attend the Committee's informal part of the July meeting to provide an update to Members on the performance of the New Bolsover housing refurbishment project.

- Review of the accessibility of the Council's website;

Members had become aware of the need to review the Council's website in light of the new accessibility regulations; Public Sector Bodies (websites and mobile applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Deadlines for compliance were; new websites by 23/09/19, existing websites by 23/09/20 (some elements may still require compliance by 23/09/19 and Mobile Apps by 23/06/21).

Members were also aware of a number of issues in navigating the Council's current website, the efficiency of current public access to committee papers/documents, which impacted on how transparent the Authority was a public sector body.

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer would arrange for a relevant officer from the Communications Team to attend the Committee's October meeting to provide an update on the work being carried out to meet the deadline for the new accessibility regulations.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that (1) Committee undertake a review of the turnaround time of the Council's void properties and to include how the Council was supporting access to housing for priority groups, particularly Ex-servicemen and Young Care Leavers,

(2) a Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 2nd September 2019 be rearranged to take place on 9th September 2019.

(3) a relevant Housing Officer be invited to attend Committee to brief Members on the New Bolsover Model Village refurbishment project.

(4) an officer from the Communications Team be invited to the Committee's October meeting to provide an update on the work being carried out to meet the deadline for the new accessibility regulations.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer/Governance Manager)

The meeting concluded at 1150 hours.