

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Virtual Meeting and Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne if required on Monday, 12 October 2020 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner (Vice-Chair), Jane Bryson, Anne Clarke, Tricia Clough, Paul Cooper, David Dixon, Ray Heffer and Andrew Joesbury.

Officers:- Matt Broughton (Head of Organisation & Transformation), Scott Chambers (Communications, Marketing and Design Manager), Lesley Botham (Customer Services Manager), Lisa Reeves (Contact Centre Manager) to Minute No CUS25-20/21.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor Clive Moesby, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Community Safety, and Mary Dooley, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Leisure.

CUS17-20/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Allan Bailey.

CUS18-20/21 URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items of business.

CUS19-20/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CUS20-20/21 MINUTES - 14TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 14th September 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

CUS21-20/21 REVIEW OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE-OPERATIONAL REVIEW - POST-SCRUTINY MONITORING FINAL REPORT.

Committee considered a post scrutiny monitoring report which provided details on progress regarding outstanding recommendations from the Committee's Review of the Council's Standards Committee carried out in 2018/2019.

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee had considered a previous monitoring report at its meeting held on 16th March 2020, which had informed Members that 3 out of the 7 recommendations had been implemented. Four of the recommendations had required an extension, which had been due to the timing of meetings of the Standards Committee post May 2019 Elections, the review of the Terms of Reference, the development of the new committee management system/current re-development of the Council's website and the availability within the Parish Council Liaison meeting schedule.

The 4 outstanding recommendations had been completed outside of the original timescale and evidence in relation to this was attached in the appendices to the report. However, 1 recommendation still required a further extension and this was due to the availability within the Parish Council Liaison (PCL) meeting schedule and the impact of Covid-19 on the ability for PCL to meet. It was suggested that Committee be updated on the progress of PCL meetings and associated presentations to Parish Councillors informally.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Community Safety, who was also a Member of the Standards Committee, welcomed the report. He added that the Standards Committee was currently undertaking arrangements to include 2 independent members from parish councils on the Committee from May 2021.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer
RESOLVED that (1) progress against the review recommendations be noted,

(2) an extension to the outstanding recommendation as outlined in the report be approved,

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

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

CUS22-20/21 UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT.

Committee considered a report which provided an update on progress and implementation of the new Council website.

A review of the Council's website had been undertaken to enable it to be more mobile friendly, easier to navigate and use, and also meet accessibility standards which the Government had recently introduced and which came into force on 23rd September 2020.

Research was undertaken and other council's websites investigated for best practice. This led to a template being developed that contained a simple A to Z of Council services rather than departmental or service specific structure and would save any unnecessary maintenance as and when departmental responsibilities changed.

A facility of being able to search the website by speech was also being tested, however, it was noted that this may only work with Google Chrome. Members and staff with a microphone enabled device were encouraged to try this speech facility and any feedback would be welcomed by the Communications Team.

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The new website was launched on Friday 18th September 2020 with initial feedback being very positive. The website would be fully accessible by April 2021.

A Member commented that he had looked at the new website and at Planning in particular but had found it hard to navigate and still difficult to find what he was looking for. Another Member noted that this was also the case in searching for available Council houses. The Communications, Marketing and Design Manager replied that both the Planning and Housing pages were provided by an external website provider that the Council subscribed to and neither were in the control of the Communications Team. However, the Communications, Marketing and Design Manager would speak to Housing to see how Members could access the site in an easier way.

In response to a query from the Scrutiny and Elections Officer, the Communications, Marketing and Design Manager advised that any documents which had been on the old website but were not on the new website would need approval from departmental managers to be reinstated. Any information relating to Scrutiny would now need to be on the Mod.Gov system and not the Council's website.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rose Bowler
RESOLVED that progress on the new Council's website be noted.

CUS23-20/21 TRANSFORMATION GOVERNANCE GROUP UPDATE.

Committee considered a verbal update from the Head of Organisation & Transformation in relation to the Transformation Programme.

The Transformation Programme had achieved great things since its adoption in late 2018 which would have a lasting positive impact on the Council. However, it was recognised that Covid19 had significantly changed the context in which the programme operated and the Council needed to be agile and adaptive to the risks and opportunities presented.

The Head of Organisation & Transformation referred to a draft report to be presented to Executive at its meeting in November, which in line with the Covid19 Recovery Plan, would consider and propose a revision to the Transformation Programme for future years.

A summary of the proposed changes to the programme were;

- Reduction in governance of the programme which was recognised to be resource intensive due to the number and frequency of meetings.
- Monitoring of historic project ideas would be replaced by monitoring of strategic transformation projects. There would also be no further 'open call' for project ideas from staff which would be replaced with direct engagement with staff on specific issues.
- Financial savings would be monitored via the existing 'line by line' annual budget review process to remove the risk of double counting savings.
- Strategic Projects included home/agile working; review of vacant space; development of Leisure Infrastructure; Bolsover Homes; Pleasley Vale Mills; Corporate Asset Carbon Reduction; Climate change marketing campaign.

Further strategic projects had been identified and agreed between the Council and the

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

local MP, Mark Fletcher, and these would be added to the list of Transformation Programme Strategic projects as they became closer to a delivery phase.

A Member queried if the agreed strategic projects between the Council and the local MP had been agreed with all Members of Council or only with the Leader, and if the conclusions and reasons as set out at 2.1 in the draft report fitted in with the Ombudsman's principles of good administrative practices in his report dated May 2020.

The Head of Organisation & Transformation advised Committee that the agreed strategic projects outlined in the draft report were taken from a joint press release between the Leader and the local MP with regard to the aims of the Council. The Head of Organisation & Transformation would clarify the wording and advise Members. With regard to Ombudsman best practice, the Head of Organisation & Transformation would also clarify this and advise Members.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Partnerships added that at its inset, the Transformation Programme had brought staff and Members together on how to improve Council services and it was now time to address parish and town councils. She commended the Head of Organisation & Transformation for his report.

A Member requested that the results from the survey of staff working from home could be provided to all Members. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer added that the Healthy Safe Clean and Green Communities Scrutiny Committee would also be looking at the results of the survey as part of their review work.

CUS24-20/21 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CUSTOMER SERVICES & CONTACT CENTRES.

Committee considered a report presented as a slide presentation by the Customer Services Manager in relation to the impact of Covid19 on customer service and the Contact Centres.

Customer Service

At the start of lockdown on 24th March, all Contact Centres were closed to the public. This included all front facing services:- face to face reception, Meet & Greet at the Arc and payment kiosks. Telephony, webchat, email and online contact remained available as the main contact channels to the public 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Posters were displayed on the front door of each Contact Centre informing customers how they could contact the Council, access services on line, make a payment and submit a form etc. Consultation had been undertaken with other service areas to ensure information was up to date and the recorded message on the Council's telephony was updated to reflect guidance which included 'self-isolation' advice for customers. These adjustments had resulted in an increase in telephone calls from customers who were concerned about rent accounts, Council Tax recovery, Planning and Land Charges.

Contact Centre Staff

The individual needs of Contact Centre staff were addressed with home working facilities issued to the most vulnerable and minimal staffing at each of the Contact Centres. Guidance was issued regarding social distancing and sanitising within the workplace, and

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

workstations were arranged to comply with 2 metre social distancing. Weekly communication with staff was vital, providing guidance and updates, addressing any concerns raised by the team, recognising any support needed, wellbeing and mental health issues. Support from Management Team was also given individually and a fair approach maintained whilst embedding the 'Key Worker / Priority Service' status and service needs.

Community Support

Through the Leader's Partnership Team, a Community Support Team (CST) was established for residents seeking guidance, assistance and support relating to Covid19. This was made accessible via the Council's main telephone number and online via the website Self Form. Some Contact Centre staff were deployed to help deliver this support service on site at Clowne, triaging all enquiries received via all contact channels. Data from residents who were self-isolating was collated to assess needs, offer regular contact and support and identify spikes of the virus. This service was initially delivered 7 days per week, including over the Easter Bank Holiday period. The Customer Services Manager asked Members to note that Contact Centre staff were committed, compassionate and embraced the project by demonstrating commendable flexibility.

As customers continued to register for support, Contact Centres were offering advice and /or signposting customers to various external agencies such as Foodbanks and pharmacies etc. Additional services included pharmacy assistance, Business Funding Grant enquiries and more recently to capture outlets not adhering to the wearing of a face mask which were passed on to Environmental Health.

Financial Impact

Although there was a potential loss of revenue to the Authority through closure of the payment kiosks, there had been an increase in direct debit take up by customers. Customer Advisors were proactive in promoting other payment channels:- online and via the Automated Telephone Payment facility (ATP). Staff overtime had been required to deliver the Contact Centre service and additionally the Community Support service. There was also the provision of sanitising equipment, face masks/visors and ICT home working equipment.

Reopening of Contact Centres

All 4 Contact Centres reopened on 15th June on reduced opening hours of 9am – 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. This was to allow for sanitising/cleaning of equipment. Risk assessments were carried out prior to opening and staff were consulted and any concerns recorded. Full PPE had been provided to staff and gels and wipes made available for customers. Advisory notices had been displayed regarding social distancing and cleaning requirements. Only 2 customers were allowed into the Contact Centre at any one time. Contact Centre staff were supported with continuing to work from home unless service needs required them to work on site.

The courier service had resumed to 3 days per week instead of the previous arrangement of 5 days as scanning of documents to service areas had been implemented where possible, for example, benefit claims and proofs.

Interview rooms in all 4 Contact Centres were to be installed with a facility for virtual 'Zoom' interviews to take place with back office services on an appointment basis. The

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

online Digital Access area near Meet and Greet had been made available for external organisations to view documents on a pre-arranged appointment basis with Planning and Land Charges. Sanitising equipment was also available for customer use.

Monitoring of access to the Contact Centres had taken place during the first 2 weeks of reopening by Customer Advisors floor walking and being proactive in dealing with enquiries where appropriate to reduce access. Further facilities to be introduced was a multi-channel system to enable webchat and email contact to be dealt with via one system and by staff who were able to work from home and also development of the website to incorporate more online services and forms.

Since the reopening of all 4 Contact Centres, Face to Face and telephone contact was increasing on a weekly basis, however, webchat and email continued to be higher than in the same period last year.

A consideration for the future was reduced Contact Centre opening hours and keeping one site open for payments and appointment only access.

In response to Members' queries, the Customer Services Manager explained that in line with Government guidance, the official NHS 'QR' code was only required for customers using the Go Active Leisure facility. Meet and Greet staff were recording customer car registrations for track and trace purposes which were kept for 21 days. In response to a Member's concern that he had witnessed some customers not using the QR Code when arriving at the Go Active Leisure facility, the Customer Services Manager would pass this on to the Leisure Operations Manager.

The Customer Services Manager confirmed that cash payments to the Council had dropped significantly due to the closure of the payment kiosks during lockdown and customer cheques to the Council had been deposited at the post office due to the suspension of the Security Plus service.

With regard to community support groups in the District, the Customer Services Manager agreed with a Member's suggestion that liaison with other community support groups in the District should be considered in the future.

A Member requested that in light of recent staff changes an up to date staff structure chart be provided to all Members.

The Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Leisure commended the Customer Services Manager, Contact Centre staff and other front line staff for all their continued hard work during the pandemic.

The Head of Organisation & Transformation advised Members that Covid19 cases in the District were relatively low, however, cases were on the rise across the country and also in Derbyshire and this was being closely monitored. The District was in Tier 1 currently but it was anticipated that this may change in the near future

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

The Head of Organisation & Transformation and the Customer Services Manager left the meeting.

CUSTOMER SERVICE & TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CUS25-20/21 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Committee considered their work programme 2020/21.

In response to a Member's question, the Scrutiny & Elections Officer advised Members that Healthy Safe Clean and Green Communities Scrutiny Committee had looked at the impact of Covid19 on Leisure Services at their meeting on 6th October.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer
RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2020/21 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 1125 hours.