

CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 24th July 2023 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Hales in the Chair

Councillors Amanda Davis, Louise Fox, Rita Turner and Jane Yates.

Officers:- Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Michelle Whetton (Revenues & Benefits Manager), Lesley Botham (Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards & Complaints Officer) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

CS11-23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Lisa Powell and Vicky Waplington.

CS12-23/24 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

CS13-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS14-23/24 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer confirmed that the current list was blank as no key decision items had come forward for the upcoming meetings prior to publication. As such there was nothing for Members to acknowledge.

CS15-23/24 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 19th June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

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CS16-23/24 BUSINESS RATES MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

The Revenues & Benefits Manager presented the revised draft policy to Members. She advised that it had been found that in recent operation of the policy, which had been approved in May 2022, that some of the criteria to be met to receive relief was too restrictive. The proposed policy revision, which was attached at to the report at Appendix 1 highlighted the suggested changes. The Policy had been reviewed to broaden the eligibility criteria to ensure it was not too restrictive or difficult to evidence. The core changes were in relation to Discretionary Rate Relief and the criteria for 'top up' awards.

Members were satisfied with the changes suggested.

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the proposed changes be noted and that the Policy advance through the Committee process to Executive for formal approval.

CS17-23/24 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2023/24 - 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 30TH JUNE 2023

The Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager presented the Q1 2023-24 report and introduced the new Customer Standards & Complaints Officer.

Key points of note were:

- Both Revenues & Benefits teams were exceeding their targets for answering of incoming calls for Q1.
- The Contact Centres target for answering incoming calls had been exceeded for Q1.
- 9,586 email enquiries had been received with 100% being acknowledged within one working day and 99.8% replied to in full within 8 working days. Only 21 emails were over the target time of 8 working days.
- 98% of Live Chats had been answered within 20 seconds, significantly exceeding the target.
- The call-back facility previously discussed with Members was now operational.
- The data in Appendix 2 was now presented in a different format following the outcome of the recent Council restructure of services. 87% of calls had been answered within 20 seconds which was below target. There was also an error on the table as the target for abandoned calls had been amended from 5% to 10%. Over 25,000 calls had been received in the first quarter and the table highlighted those services not meeting target.
- In relation to the data gathered in Appendix 3(C), a total of 89 stage one complaints had been received with a large proportion related to Streetscene services and missed bins/missed delivery of new and replacement bins.
- The volume of MP enquiries continued to be high with 91% of the 71 enquiries received responded to in time.
- A total of five complaints had escalated to stage 3 within the quarter.
- There had been no Ombudsman complaints for Q1.

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A Member clarified whether the performance figures in relation to abandoned calls would be addressed with the Senior Leadership Team. The Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager confirmed that the Service Director would raise this with senior leadership to seek improvement. The advice to services was to encourage use of the main contact centre number rather than direct dial numbers to reduce the issue of abandoned calls.

A Member noted a stage one complaint received in relation to an officer's comment on social media and asked if this was being addressed. The Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager noted that she was still evaluating the Q1 data and would provide feedback to Members in due course.

The Chair acknowledged that the service was working really hard and appreciated the speed of response to customers. The number of complaints that related to bins and waste collection was noted but Members were aware of the continued coverage on twitter and other communication channels as to how resident's should deal with their rubbish and the correct bin to use. The Chair also noted that they had seen coverage on social media from Derbyshire County Council in relation to proposed changes to the opening hours at the Household Waste Recycling Centre. They questioned what impact this could have locally. The Strategic Director of Services noted that they had not received notification of this as yet but they were aware there was the potential for change. In relation to the number of complaints received regarding waste collections and bins it was important to put this into perspective - the Council completed approximately 2.4 million bin collections per year, so in comparison the number of complaints received was minimal. There were also a number of compliments which countered the complaints.

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox

RESOLVED that the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints be noted.

(Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager)

CS18-23/24 REVIEW OF COUNCIL-OWNED ADAPTED ACCOMMODATION - POST SCRUTINY MONITORING (FINAL REPORT)

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer briefed Members on the original review of Council-owned adapted accommodation, which had taken place during the 2021-22 Work Programme.

The issue was initially raised via an Executive report in April 2021, highlighting the need to evaluate our supply of family-sized adapted accommodation. It was noted that the Council had been approached by applicants seeking very specific accommodation as a result of having younger family members with disabilities. Although these applications were relatively rare, they had raised the issue of the supply of family-sized adapted accommodation.

The Committee had put together nine recommendations which aimed to assist the Council in improving policy and procedures in relation to allocation and management of adapted accommodation.

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To date six out of nine recommendations had been achieved, two were on track and would require ongoing delivery, and one had been extended but should be completed within the revised suggested timescale. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer briefed Members on each recommendation in turn so the outcomes of the review were clear to those who had not been involved originally.

Members requested that the final outcome of the mapping exercise be brought back to Members once completed.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox.

RESOLVED that (1) progress against the review recommendations be noted.

(2) exceptions to delivery and additional actions required be acknowledged.

(3) the report and findings be made public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's Constitution.

CS19-23/24 CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2023/24. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained that the programme was a fluid document which could be added to and amended as required. The programme was considered as part of every meeting to allow Committee Members to adjust to emerging issues throughout the year. Members also considered the draft scope previously agreed and were happy to progress as documented.

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis

RESOLVED that (1) the Work Programme 2022/23 be approved and noted.

(2) the draft review scope be approved for delivery during 2023/24.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:27 hours and Members then met as a working party to agree their programme of review work for the year. The working party concluded at 11:09 hours.