

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, 25th March 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

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

Officers:- Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Pam Brown (Service Director, Executive Corporate Services and Partnerships), (to Minute No.CS53-23/24), Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager), (to Minute No. CS53-23/24), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer), (to Minute No.CS53-23/24), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer) and Alison Bluff (Governance).

CS46-23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CS47-23/24 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS48-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CS49-23/24 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

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

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

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CS50-23/24 MINUTES – 22ND JANUARY 2024

Moved by Councillor Donna Hales and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd January 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

CS51-23/24 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022/23 – 1ST OCTOBER 2023 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023

Committee considered the Q3 performance report (1st October to 31st December 2023) in relation to the Council's Customer Service Standards and effective management of complaints.

Appendix 1 of the report set out that 80% of incoming calls for Revenues being achieved, above the target of 65%; 91% of Benefits calls being achieved, above that target of 78%; 100% of emails acknowledged in 1 working day; 99.7% of emails replied to within 8 working days, with 19 replied over that time; 78% of 15,976 incoming calls being answered within 20 seconds, above the 75% target; and 96% incoming Live Chats being answered within 20 seconds, above the 75% target. These figures were for Q3.

Members were advised that future reports would include data from Leisure and Revenues and Benefits.

Appendix 2 of the report showed performance for unanswered calls during the period, with 6% of incoming calls direct to service areas not being answered, though this was within the 10% target. Departments meeting or exceeding this target included Finance, Audit, Revenues and Benefits, Joint ICT, Planning and Joint Environmental Health.

The Customer Service, Complaints & Standards Manager noted that a reminder to promote the 01246 242424 would be beneficial as the main customer contact, rather than individual officer direct dial extensions, to assist with meeting the target of 93% of calls being answered in 20 seconds; the figure for Q3 stood at 83%.

Appendix 3 of the report showed the number of written compliments received during the period by department: 69 compliments had been received; 9 comments had been made; and 63 complaints had been recorded.

1 Ombudsman complaint had been received for Q3, but a decision not to investigate was made as there had not been enough evidence to justify any fault in the way the Council had acted.

The Chair noted a lot of the targets were being made and surpassed, though work needed to continue to improve the Council's services; it was important to catch the calls to direct lines, as this was where most of the complaints were being directed. The Customer Service, Complaints & Standards Manager agreed, stating it was important to ensure staff had access to the softphone system to enable answering calls reliably from home.

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Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CS52-23/24 COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY REVIEW

Committee considered a report and Members' feedback was sought on the revised Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy (CCC Policy).

As explained at the previous Committee meeting, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) had undertaken a consultation in November 2023 with a view to align both requirements for local authorities to respond to complaints effectively and fairly from the 1st April 2024. The Council had participated in the consultation and had provided information. The purpose of this new Joint Complaint Handling Code was to enable resolution of complaints from individuals quickly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive improvements.

Senior Leadership Team had been updated and the policy had been amended to incorporate both the LGSCO and HO to comply with, strengthen and clarify the requirements. The new policy would take effect from 1st April 2024 to ensure a full year's first report, and a self-assessment would be submitted to the Ombudsman and made available to the public at the end of 2024/2025. Whilst the LGSCO did not specify the need for a submission before 1st April 2025, the Council did not want two codes in effect so had chosen to implement the new policy from the 1st April 2024.

The Customer Service Standards and Procedures would be updated and aligned to the policy, which may impact internal service area procedures. Senior Leadership Team and Service Managers had been updated and an overview would be delivered to all key officers over the next few weeks; the removal of the informal complaints process would impact the Complaints Officer if an understanding of the policy requirements and the definitions of the service were not understood.

Service areas needed to ensure customers had the opportunity to make a complaint, and services must not look at the potential increase of complaints as a negative as it would improve the services the Council provided.

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager referred the Committee to the amended and existing policies and the list of changes made in the provided document. The Chair thanked the Customer Service Team for their work.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington
RESOLVED that the policy review be noted.

The Service Director, Executive Corporate Services and Partnerships, the Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager and the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.

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CS53-23/24 CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Committee considered their Work Programme 2023/24.

Members were reminded of the Extraordinary meeting to be held on Monday 22nd April 2024.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington
RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:20 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:04 hours.