

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, 16th September 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner (Vice-Chair), Louise Fox, Phil Smith and Vicky Waplington.

Officers:- Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor Jane Yates, Junior Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing.

CS20-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Amanda Davis, Lisa Powell and Deborah Watson.

CS21-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS22-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CS23-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 15th July 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

CS24-24/25 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.

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

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CS25-24/25 ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN 2023/24 - REPORT

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager presented the Annual Letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) report. This contained an annual summary of statistics on the complaints made against the Council for the financial year ending 31st March 2024. The Annual Letter was attached at Appendix 1.

The LGSCO had received 8 enquiries and complaints during 2023/24; 3 were closed after initial enquiries; 3 were referred back for local resolution/internal complaints process; and 1 case was invalid or incomplete. One decision had been received May 2024 and was closed after initial enquiries.

No items needed to be investigated. The Council's performance compared favourably with other local districts.

Members agreed the results were commendable. The Chair added this was a great success for all those involved.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CS26-24/25 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2023/24 - 1ST APRIL 2024 TO 30TH JUNE 2024

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager presented the report on the Council's performance, its effective management, and the number of compliments, comments and complaints from 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024 to Committee.

Appendix 1 provided a breakdown of the key customer service standards, together with the target and cumulative performance for each standard in Q1 2024/25. Appendix 2 provided a breakdown of the Telephony Performance in the same period. Appendix 3 provided the list of Compliments, Comments, Complaints and M.P. enquiries in greater detail, including locations and service areas involved in the same period.

Some targets had been changed to reflect more achievable results. For the Contact Centre, where wait times were higher in some locales, more assistance would be provided.

51 written Compliments (41 of these for Go! Active), 8 Comments (2 for Go! Active), 86 Stage One Complaints (4 recorded and resolved for Go! Active), 32 M.P. enquiries (all responded to within 10 working days), 15 Stage Two Complaints (all responded to within 20 working days), and 2 Ombudsman Complaints (1 case – No Fault/Investigation, 1 case awaiting outcome) were received in Q1 2024/25.

The Council had been graded C2 by the Regulator of Social Housing following an inspection in May 2024. The Regulator had commented that the Council had a low level of complaints and that they were answered promptly. Improvements had been given to the Council to achieve a C1 grade.

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The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager added that if the Committee wished to amend how the trend and improvement analysis was presented in future reports, this could be arranged.

A Member felt the wording for a local authority to be graded C2 was harsh, as the Council's performance remained very respectable.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager left the meeting.

CS27-24/25 REVIEW OF MEMBERS ICT & SUPPORT AND ICT SERVICE DELIVERY - POST- SCRUTINY MONITORING (SECOND INTERIM REPORT)

The Scrutiny Officer explained the review had initially commenced 2020/21 because of operational issues raised by the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. When the review restarted 2022/23, the aim refocussed on Member ICT equipment and support.

Members had remained concerned on the following: remote support for iPads to enable easier updates; Member ICT equipment; Member ICT support; Council Chamber/meeting room ICT equipment; power supply within the Council Chamber; creation of a Member IT Working Group; accessibility of mod.gov; and access to the Council's intranet.

The Committee had put together 13 recommendations with the aim to assist the Council in improving equipment provision and support to Members, and the operation of meeting spaces within a modern post-COVID-19 environment.

9 out of these 13 recommendations had been achieved (2 completed behind schedule).

The remaining 4 recommendations had been extended. These were: that necessary works be completed in the Council Chamber to upgrade the power supply; that consideration be given to providing additional access to the intranet (either via an extranet link or additional on-site PC/Laptop provision) for Members; that a review of the Council Chamber and meeting room ICT equipment takes place; and that a review of Members' ICT Equipment provision also takes place.

A Member raised that a previous discussion on Members' ICT Equipment included laptops with mobile network access using sim cards. The Chair agreed that this would be useful when out of office to complete Council business and Member casework. The Scrutiny Officer explained the Director of ICT had provided an update two weeks prior but would investigate this point.

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith
RESOLVED that: 1) Members note the progress against the review recommendations;

- 2) that Members acknowledge any exceptions to delivery and clarify the additional action required by the service;

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- 3) that Members make its report and findings public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's Constitution;
- 4) that Officers continue to implement the recommendations and submit a further report in six months' time highlighting progress and any exceptions to delivery.

CS28-24/25 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNCIL'S WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL EDUCATION - EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Committee had agreed to undertake a review of effectiveness of the Council's waste collection and disposal education as part of the 2023-24 Work Programme. The issue had been raised due to concerns of contamination rates within recycling waste collections, creating additional costs to the Council through contamination charges.

The Committee had sought evidence including the following: internal enquiries to assess the Council's existing policies and approach to waste disposal advice and education and the Council's existing waste collection procedures; an analysis of the current educational material and channels used by the Communications Team; and an evaluation of the current accessibility and reach of the Council's communication services.

Following the review, the Committee had agreed 11 recommendations. These had subsequently been accepted by the Executive, and the Committee would review progress made February 2025.

The Strategic Director of Services informed the Committee that two schools, Park Infant & Junior School, Orchard Close, Shirebrook and Glebe Junior School, Hamlet Lane, South Normanton, had invited the Council to attend and provide lessons on correct waste disposal; arrangements to be made. H. W. Martin Waste Ltd. had recruited a Social Value Officer who would also provide further support to the Council in schools.

A Customers Services week would be taking place November 2024 for community groups and include a stall for the Council's Recycling Promotor. Door knocking work was taking place to distribute recycling information. The annual calendars would be distributed October 2024.

The Chair noted the work had been challenging but worthwhile. Members were also publishing recycling information on their social media pages. The Chair stated the calendar was essential as not all residents were digitally able.

The Strategic Director of Services added that while recycling outturns had dropped recently, this was likely due to outside circumstances (e.g., wet weather reduced the generation of garden waste).

A discussion was held to improve recycling rates, the cost benefits recycling brought to the Council, the need for residents to use the Burgundy bins correctly, as well as the general reduction in food and drink packaging and legislation such as the Plastic Tax 2023.

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The Chair reiterated it was important for Members to push forward the benefits of recycling in their Wards.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox

RESOLVED that: 1) Members note Executive's Response to the Review of Effectiveness of Council's Waste Collection and Disposal Education;

2) that Members make its report and findings public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Constitution;

3) that Officers monitor progress on the recommendations and report in six and twelve months' time highlighting exceptions to delivery, in accordance with Part 3.6(1) of the Constitution.

The Junior Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing and the Strategic Director of Services left the meeting.

CS29-24/25 CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Committee agreed to consider its Work Programme 2024/25 in the informal scrutiny session.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted and discussed in the informal session.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:42 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:03 hours.