

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 13th September 2021 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

Councillors Allan Bailey, David Dixon, Stan Fox, Ray Heffer, Andrew Joesbury and Rita Turner.

Officers:- Victoria Dawson (Head of Housing Management & Enforcement) Ann Bedford (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer), Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer) and Alison Bluff (Governance Officer).

CS8-21/22. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

CS9-21/22. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS10-21/22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS11-21/22. MINUTES – 2nd AUGUST 2021

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor David Dixon

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd August 2021 be approved as a correct record.

CS12-21/22. 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 Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

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CS13-21/22. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLAINTS

Committee considered a report which provided the Council's performance in relation to its Customer Service Standards and the effective management of complaints for the period 1st October 2020 to 31st March 2021.

Customer Service Standards - An appendix to the report provided a breakdown of the key customer service standards by quarterly period, together with the target and the cumulative performance for each standard.

Telephones – The target was 93% to be answered within 20 seconds. Cumulatively, performance was 99% over 2020/21.

Members were asked to note that telephone calls diverted to staff working from home were not being recorded and the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer was currently undertaking a piece of work to see if these calls could be qualified.

Contact Centres – The target was 80% of incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds. Cumulatively performance was 97% over 2020/21 which exceeded the target of 80%.

Revenues & Benefits - The target was 60% of incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds. Cumulatively performance was 76% over 2020/21, which exceeded the target of 60%.

E-mails – Target 1 was 100% to be acknowledged within 1 working day and Target 2 was 100% to be replied to within 8 working days. 8,510 email enquiries were received from the public through enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk and all were acknowledged within one working day. 99% were replied to in full within 8 working days.

The volume of e-mails had increased compared to the same period in 2020/21 of 6,488. Email remained a popular method of contact, particularly due to other contact channels being unavailable for some of the period of monitoring (e.g. face to face and webchat).

Face to face monitoring – No monitoring had been undertaken due to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic arrangements.

Compliments – 105 written compliments were received during the period which covered various departments. The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer had also passed these compliments on to the Head of Paid Service.

Comments – 39 comments were received and all 39 were acknowledged and passed to the respective department within the target time of 3 working days.

Complaints – Frontline resolution (stage one) – An appendix to the report showed the number of Frontline Resolution complaints received by the Contact Centre service and recorded on the Customer Information System (Firmstep) by department. The customer service standard for responding to these complaints was 3 working days.

Complaints - Formal Investigation (stage two) – 123 formal investigation complaints were received during the period. 97% were responded to within the customer service standard of 15 working days. Covid-19 restrictions had impacted on performance

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during the earlier part of 2020/21, as some staff were either unavailable due to sickness or redeployed to other duties. However, this appeared to have improved.

Internal Review (stage three) – 17 stage three complaints were received during the period, all of which were responded to within the standard of 20 working days.

Ombudsman – During the period, 3 cases were received. One decision was that the Ombudsman could not investigate the complaint because the complainant had already appealed to the Planning Inspector. The remainder were awaiting a decision.

Members requested that for future reports, the details relating to each complaint be included and split between justified and unjustified as this would be helpful to Members when considering their Review work.

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer also noted that a complaint could be partially justified and this was currently a category in the report.

In response to a Member's comment, the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer advised that the recorded message on the Council's main telephone number would be altered and reduced as normal working practices resumed.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CS14-21/22. LG&SCO AND HOUSING OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Committee considered a report which provided information contained within the Annual Letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) 2020/21.

The LGSCO letter contained an annual summary of statistics on the complaints made about the Council for the financial year ending 31st March 2021. Members were asked to note that the data provided by the LGSCO may not align with the data the Council held because the LGSCO numbers included enquiries from people who had been signposted by them back to the Council but who may then have chosen not to pursue their complaint. Benchmarking information with close neighbouring authorities was also included in the report

The LGSCO had received 6 enquiries and complaints during 2020/21, one of which was subject to a detailed investigation. The LGSCO decided 7 complaints - 2 were incomplete or invalid, 2 were closed after initial enquiries and in 2 cases, advice was given only. The remaining one was decided as 'maladministration and injustice'.

One complaint in relation to the New Bolsover regeneration project was upheld against the Council and as required following the LGSCO decision a report was submitted to Executive on 21st June 2021.

Although the report was regarding complaints directed to the LGSCO, the Council also received three complaints via the Housing Ombudsman (HO) for the same period, one of which was decided during that period. In that case the decision was that there was 'no maladministration'.

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Moved by Councillor Andrew Joesbury and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.

CS15-21/22. NORTH DERBYSHIRE ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY 2021-2023

Committee considered a report in relation to a revised draft North Derbyshire Rough Sleeper Strategy 2021–2023.

It was a legal requirement for the Council to have a published Rough Sleeper Strategy in place.

The draft Rough Sleeper Strategy was an updated document following the success of the 2020-21 North Derbyshire Strategy. It outlined why it was essential to provide a package of measures to enable vulnerable members of the community who were without accommodation and suffering a range of multiple complex needs to access services and to live safely and independently. The measures would have a positive effect on communities within the District and also took account of what the Council had done in partnership during the Pandemic.

The proposed updated Strategy continued to be rooted in a partnership approach between the Council, other statutory services, the third sector and homeless people, and also continued to be based on the three 'pillars' of prevention, intervention and recovery that were identified in the National Rough Sleeper Strategy.

Many of the commitments from the existing strategy remained in place as they were continuous commitments. However, new and ambitious commitments had been added and these would maximum outcomes and act as a cornerstone for the delivery of additional activity.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Housing Management & Enforcement advised Members that the Strategy positively worked - the people who had been supported through the Strategy had been given living accommodation. The partnership received grant funding and this supported a 17 unit residential accommodation for rough sleepers that all three authorities had access rights to 24/7.

Members welcomed the report and thanked the Head of Housing Management & Enforcement for attending the meeting.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CS16-21/22. CONSULTATION ON HOUSING POLICIES – RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS POLICY

Committee considered a report in relation to an updated Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

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The updated Rechargeable Repairs Policy provided a definition of rechargeable repairs and the circumstances in which it may arise. It also set out the internal procedure in terms of assessing repairs and calculating recharges, as well as the recovery process that would be followed. In addition, there was a section on when the Council may exercise discretion, for example, when a person's vulnerabilities affected their ability to pay the rechargeable repairs, or there may be exceptional circumstances which needed to be considered

There was also a formal appeals process where a tenant was given an opportunity to challenge the reasons for recharge or the recharge amount. This was considered by the Repairs Manager in the first instance, and if this was challenged further, was dealt as a complaint in accordance with the Council's Complaints procedure

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Housing Management & Enforcement advised Members that any rechargeable repayments would have to be affordable for the customer. An income and expenditure form would be completed and there would be a long term commitment from the customer to pay back the recharges.

The Head of Housing Management & Enforcement further advised Members that the Tenant Improvement and Alteration Policy would be presented to Members for their consideration at a future meeting.

Members thanked the Head of Housing Management & Enforcement for the report.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Head of Housing Management & Enforcement left the meeting.

CS17-21/22. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 – AGREEMENT OF REVIEW SCOPE

Committee considered their work programme 2021/22.

Members considered a scoping document in relation to their Review work regarding 'Council Owned Adapted Accommodation'.

A Member suggested that the workload of the CAN Rangers and their effectiveness in the work they carried out be reviewed, and also how Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were monitored in relation to any breaches, as Members were not provided with any evidence of PSPOs being enforced. Another Member suggested that a presentation could be provided to this Committee or Council in relation to an update on the CAN Ranger Service.

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer noted that the Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Committee would carry out their annual review of the Community Safety Partnership in the near future and they could provide an update to this Committee on the CAN Ranger service. However, she would make enquiries with regard to a presentation to Members on the service and inform Members at the next meeting.

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Moved by Councillor Andrew Joesbury and seconded by Councillor Rose Bowler

RESOLVED that (1) the work programme 2021/22 be noted,

(2) the scoping document be agreed.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 1105 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The formal meeting concluded at 1125 hours