

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 18th July 2022 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

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

Officers: Steve Brunt (Assistant Director of Streetscene), Deborah Whallett (Housing Enforcement Manager), Lesley Botham (Customer Services Manager) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

Also in attendance was Councillor Deborah Watson (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health & Licensing).

CS09-22/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Sandra Peake and Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director of Enforcement & Housing Management).

CS10-22/23 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS11-22/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS12-22/23 MINUTES - 23RD MAY 2022

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd May 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CS13-22/23 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.

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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.

CS14-22/23 OPERATIONAL UPDATE ON WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES

The Assistant Director of Streetscene provided Members with an operational update on the Streetscene service and highlighted potential changes expected as a result of new legislation. The service currently operated with over 100 staff delivering over 2.3million collections per annum. All 3 collection services had at least 90% customer satisfaction rates.

During the Covid pandemic at the end of 2020/early 2021, the service faced significant pressures in relation to the burgundy bin collection service. Officers became aware that the external contractor was at risk of folding and took necessary steps to reduce the risks the service faced. However, despite the Council's efforts the company ultimately went in to voluntary liquidation. The Council secured transfer of staff and vehicles immediately ensuring that the service was operational for the following week.

All of this had impacted performance against SS05 (Amount of residual household waste disposed of by way of landfill) and ENV03 (Achieve a combined recycling and composting rate of 40% by March 2023). In addition to this, due to changes in packaging over the previous two years, particularly weight of glass bottles becoming lighter which impacted on the amount of waste recycled. As such, the recycling rate target had been adjusted accordingly to reflect the impacts on delivery.

Proposed national changes

The revised national Waste Strategy that was currently delayed was expected to change how the Council dealt with food/organic waste amongst other things. This could mean it could no longer be combined with other waste and may require the Council to adopt a separate weekly collection. Statutory guidance was awaited and it was likely a lot of the changes would need to be implemented by 2025/26.

Additional changes may also see tariffs on packaging to help fund waste collection and recycling, which could further increase cost of living due to pricing of groceries etc. Some elements of business waste had already been identified for exclusion from the tariff which could push more on the consumer.

Potential Service Changes - queries

Cllr Joesbury asked for further clarification on the potential for weekly food waste collections.

It was noted that as well as improvements to food waste collection, the government was keen to see free garden waste collections across all authorities. While this element would not affect BDC it would significantly impact neighbouring authorities who do charge and rely on the income. Additionally, from April 2027 the recycling of flexible plastics (wrapping etc.) would also be mandated. BDC had recently adapted collections to

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introduce this now ahead of the national requirement. The Council was assessing future options for paper recycling. It currently accounted for 3-4 tonnes each week but with the cost of the collection bags/caddies it may be more cost effective in the long-term not to separate paper.

If the Council chose not to separate paper then current burgundy bin collections could be adjusted freeing up resource for black/green bin collections. Property growth was also impacting the service with over 4000 new homes anticipated over the next 5 to 15 years which would impact collection rounds.

Cllr Joesbury queried what consultation there had been with the service/Council in relation to the proposed changes.

The Assistant Director Streetscene noted that the service had responded to multiple consultations, with private providers also engaging in the developments of the new national waste strategy.

Performance queries

Cllr Dixon queried how the targets were set in relation to residual waste being sent to landfill.

The Assistant Director Streetscene noted that the Revised Waste Framework Directive 2005 had set a range of targets but now Britain was no longer in the EU the legislation did not apply in the same way. BDC had generally been performing well in UK league tables and would like to get back to recycling 40-42%. Approximately 23% of the waste in black bins was food/organic waste. If this could be collected differently and extracted for recycling/reuse this could easily give another 5% to 10% towards the recycling target.

Cllr Dixon queried whether more enforcement in relation to waste and recycling could boost rates and help to further limit contamination.

It was noted that while this enforcement power was available to the Council it was rarely used.

Cllr Dixon queried what control BDC had over commercial waste, particularly recycling of commercial waste, to improve current rates.

It was noted the core duty for the Council related to residential waste but a service was offered to businesses. Typically, the Council offered specific collection options such as bottle banks or paper/card skips.

Cllr Bailey queried wait times for bulky waste collections as he was aware of a resident waiting 5 weeks.

It was noted the target time was 10-12 days, but shouldn't be longer than 2 weeks. Although there were some issues during Covid, there shouldn't be a 5 week wait. The assistant Director asked for details so this could be investigated further.

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Cllr Bowler noted that Members had reviewed Q1/Q2 complaints data which had raised some concerns. She queried service capacity to store new/replacement bins and manage deliveries.

It was noted that there was space for 700-800 bins at the depot. There had been issues with delivery lead times due to delays in receipt of bin stock. Covid and Brexit had impacted supply chain and for parts of 2020 and 2021 staff had to be redeployed within the service to maintain collections at the expense of repairs/bin deliveries, although this situation had now improved.

Cllr Bowler noted a common issue that she was presented with was the white recycling bags being thrown in to the back of the lorry during collections.

It was noted they were kept separate due to the twin pack in the red bin lorries. The load was checked at the recycling site when the processed to check for unexpected items. Paper collection was currently being reassessed, as previously mentioned, as on some occasions the collection was via a lorry where the twin pack was broken so all waste was mixed. It could still be filtered out at Martins and the back-end of the process but costs and processes were being evaluated to establish if it was still the correct approach to separate paper.

Cllr Bowler asked what provisions were in place for the refuse collection staff during hot weather, particularly the current heatwave.

It was noted that water and sunblock was available, and shorts could be worn. The collection rounds were designed to be complete hopefully before the peak of the high temperatures.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury.

RESOLVED that (1) the current performance of the service be noted,

(2) following the release of new guidance from Defra, a further discussion to take place about how Scrutiny could engage in the development of new policies and operational practices that would enable the Council to remain compliant.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer/Assistant Director of Streetscene)

CS15-22/23

CONSULTATION ON DERBYSHIRE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-2027

The Housing Enforcement Manager briefed Members on the proposed countywide strategy that was currently being consulted on. The last two years had proved particularly difficult for those working in homelessness support with the 'everybody in' mandate and legislation changes and innovation in delivery. The new strategy gave a coordinated approach which should lead to much better outcomes for those requiring support.

It was noted that this new strategy sat under the Health & Wellbeing Board at DCC emphasising the wider links of homelessness to a person's general health and wellbeing. The new county wide homelessness and rough sleeping strategy (see appendix 1) had a core aim to break down system blockages, and argued that a multidisciplinary approach

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was needed to make systems work better and that services were flexibly designed around the needs of customers.

The strategy would meet the vision and aims through the delivery of 4 clear priorities:

1. Make homelessness everyone's responsibility through a system wide approach
2. Prevent homelessness and respond through early intervention and personalised solutions
3. End rough sleeping and repeat homelessness
4. Develop sustainable supported and settled housing solutions

Cllr Joesbury noted concern that the current living costs would increase homelessness, with a higher proportion linked to mental health issues. It was queried if there was more funding going in to this area as he was aware of a 2 year wait for some DCC services.

The Housing Enforcement Manager noted that rates of homelessness were currently peaking with 3-4 s.21 notices per day. Government were currently trying to change legislation to stop landlords moving forward with no-fault evictions, which would put local services under pressure until this was in place. A partnership approach was taken in relation to mental health, it was not just a DCC service. However, it was hoped that with the new strategy sitting under the Health & Wellbeing Board all agencies should be taking a coordinated approach.

Cllr Dixon also noted the increase in s.21 notices and felt a number of them were profit driven due to the changes in the housing market. He hoped the new legislation would be in place soon. He also queried if there would be mandatory registration of private landlords under the new legislation as this was also causing an issue in some areas.

The Housing Enforcement Manager agreed to check and give feedback to Members.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer.

RESOLVED that Members review and provide comment on the draft Derbyshire Homeless Strategy with a view to this being adopted by Bolsover District Council.

(Housing Enforcement Manager)

CS16-22/23

OPERATIONAL UPDATE ON CUSTOMER SERVICES

The Customer Services Manager gave a presentation to Members updating them on current service delivery; performance trends; customer contact preferences; planned service developments. Customer Services worked on behalf of all other service areas in the Council as the first point of contact, with their service plan aligned to the Council Ambitions and Priorities.

Since the pandemic customer contact channels had changed with face to face contacts decreasing by 50%. Use of email has doubled from around 4,000 to 8,000 and live chat (a new method on contact) was around 800-1,000 per month. Where customers were coming direct to contact centres for face-to-face support they were now presenting with multiple issues which was resulting in longer transactions than usual. This was now being

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monitored so processes could be adapted accordingly. Digital contact had increased significantly with over 40% using online channels. However, face-to-face contact was still required for those not comfortable or unable to use online contact.

Members were briefed on a number of recent achievements including:

- Introduction of over-phone payments
- Reinstatement of call-recording
- Implementation of multi-channel telephony system – this could be tailored to employees skills and knowledge levels so that more experienced colleagues handled a more complex workload. It was also possible to prioritise calls over email/live chat when call volumes were high.
- Implementation of Sign Solutions for those with hearing difficulties.

One of the core future plans was implementation of Information Screens within Contact Centres. It was hoped to develop a suite of promotional screens for each service area that could run on rotation. In addition, officers were aiming to develop a real-time satisfaction solution to capture data for services was a high priority. Furthermore, officers aimed to refine the approach to reducing avoidable contact, and develop and implement a call-back facility which should all maximise the efficiency and flexibility of the service.

A Q&A session followed with the following points raised:

Cllr Heffer – Access to a Contact Centre by Tibshelf residents was not easy and residents would benefit from a mobile centre or something closer, bus routes to South Normanton were a real problem. Could we have something more locally based?

Pre-pandemic a community based advisor was being considered and Housing services now run such a service. This has been raised previously.

Cllr Dixon – Could we develop a pop-up service that could go across the District to cover those areas not in proximity to a Centre?

We do try to do this at partnership events and events by Housing/ASB.

Cllr Joesbury – A presence at events is really good but not regular. Could we have a mobile office like the old style mobile libraries?

This can be considered.

Cllr Bowler – there no longer seems to be advertising of available properties in Contact Centre windows – why not?

Advertising is now mostly online but a printout can still be done. We can look in to this.

Cllr Bowler – does the call back facility give the customer a queue position?

This is something we can build in to the system

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Moved by Councillor Andrew Joesbury and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner.
RESOLVED that the presentation and update from service managers be noted.

(Customer Services Manager)

CS17-22/23 REVIEW OF COUNCIL-OWNED ADAPTED ACCOMMODATION – EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer presented the official response from Executive to the Committee's recent review of Council-owned Adapted Accommodation. All recommendations had been approved and the review was now in a twelve-month monitoring period.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner.
RESOLVED that (1) Executive's Response to the Review of the Council-owned Adapted accommodation be noted,

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

(3) 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.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

CS18-22/23 WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2022/23.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Rose Bowler.
RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be noted and approved.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal public part of the meeting ended at 11:32 hours.

CS19-22/23 REVIEW WORK

Members moved into the Informal part of the meeting and discussed evidence and findings so far within their review of IT Services and Support. This was stalled during the pandemic and was now being restarted to ensure any areas that Scrutiny could still add value were explored fully.

The Informal meeting ended at 12.00 noon.