

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 10th October 2022 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

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

Officers: Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management & Enforcement), Lesley Botham (Customer Services Manager), Liz Robinson (Customer Standards & Complaints Officer) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

CS20-22/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Patricia Clough and Rita Turner.

CS21-22/23 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

CS22-22/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS23-22/23 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18TH JULY 2022

It was noted that Councillor Patricia Clough had given her apologies and the Chair requested these be added for completeness.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 18th July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CS24-22/23 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.

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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CS25-22/23 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2021/22 - 1ST OCTOBER 2021 TO 31ST MARCH 2022 AND ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement, the Customer Services Manager and the Customer Standards & Complaints Officer provided Members with an overview of the Council's performance for Q3/Q4 2021/22 and overall performance for 2021/22, in relation to the Council's customer standards and complaints.

The report presented followed the usual format but it was noted that following the change in delivery for customer standards and complaints it was hoped to provide reports in a slightly revised format and also increase the frequency to quarterly.

Officers focussed on the headline detail in the cover report.

2.1 Customer Service Standards – Telephones

The Council's target was 93% of calls to be answered within 20 seconds. Cumulative performance for 2021/22 was 91%. This was as a result of underperformance in specific service areas across the year – notably Revenues & Benefits, Housing/Community Safety, and Planning.

This section would be amended going forward to also show abortive calls to give a fuller picture of performance against telephone standards.

It was noted that some departments had different targets to reflect the volume of calls dealt with and nature of the enquiries. Contact Centres had a target of 75% answered within 20 seconds. This was currently off target due to staffing issues. It was also noted that the data for Revenues & Benefits was now being split out to show both sections separately, to accurately reflect that they operated to different targets.

2.2 Compliments, Comments and Complaints

Officers went through the summary of performance on pages 15-17.

2.2 Compliments

It was proposed that going forward the data be presented in a summary format showing volume per department, rather than the full written report. Customer Services would then monitor those receiving a large volume of compliments/ regular compliments and acknowledge accordingly.

2.2 Comments

It was proposed to present in a summary format going forward showing volume by department.

2.2 Complaints (Frontline resolution stage 1)

It was proposed going forward to present this in summary format by area, outlining number of complaints against each service category - this would allow easier analysis of trends in data which was welcomed by Members.

Following presentation of the report a brief discussion took place:

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Q: What are we doing about face-to-face local contact outside of the Contact Centres, as discussed at a recent meeting?

A: Within the staff at South Normanton CC, a staff member had been identified to take on the role of a Community Customer Advisor to attend sessions at foodbanks and community venues in the south of the District.

Q: Do we have an understanding of the volume of people struggling to access services due to IT issues – is it shown in complaints data?

A: This would show up in the current data gathered and be addressed accordingly. It was hoped to get officers attending local groups across the District, not just in the south, and officers were currently gathering data on local groups/venues. It was also noted that some customers requiring extra help were identified by other means such as careline and the warden service.

Q: Why should we look to analyse the log of abortive calls?

A: Officers would like to trial providing this data to Members for at least a 12 month period. It was already produced as part of the call monitoring reports so did not require extra work and would allow Members to identify service areas that were not performing as expected.

Q: Are we looking to ensure outreach services in all areas without a physical Contact Centre located?

A: Yes that was the intention.

Q: More face-to-face contact with residents would be preferable as transport access to larger towns where Contact Centres are situated is often very limited adding hours to a journey that would be a few minutes by car.

A: It was hoped that further contact could be made with parish clerks via the quarterly Parish Council Liaison meetings. The aim was to agree a partnership approach to how residents could be referred or offered a localised outreach service.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury

RESOLVED that (1) the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee note the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints,

(2) the reports change to a quarterly reporting frequency, with Members agreeing to the revised presentation of the data as proposed by officers,

(3) the report for Q1 & Q2 be scheduled earlier to the December meeting, with Q3 to be scheduled for February 2023.

(Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement/
Customer Services Manager/ Customer Standards & Complaints Officer)

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CS26-22/23

LG&SCO AND HOUSING OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Assistant Director of Housing Management and Enforcement presented a report outlining the annual overview from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The LGSCO received 10 enquiries and complaints during 2021/22, one of which was subject to a detailed investigation.

The LGSCO decided 10 complaints, of which 1 case was decided 'a service failure', 7 were closed 'with no further investigation' after initial enquiries and in 2 cases there was no 'Maladministration and injustice'.

The Council 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'.

A discussion took place in relation to the benchmarking data provided. Currently the Authority was benchmarked against six other authorities from across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, within its CIPFA Nearest Neighbour group. There was mixed opinion from Members as to the usefulness of this with some for and against using such a range of authorities. It was agreed that moving forward, the focus would be on comparison with North Derbyshire authorities only (Chesterfield and North-East Derbyshire) rather than a wider group.

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

RESOLVED that Scrutiny receive and note the report and the Annual Letter from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman 2021/22.

(Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement/
Customer Services Manager/ Customer Standards & Complaints Officer)

CS27-22/23

WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2022/23. It was noted that the programme would be amended to incorporate additional Complaints reports now it had been agreed to move to quarterly reporting. Furthermore, additional policy reports were due to come forward from Housing Management which were yet to be programmed.

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

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

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:45 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:10 hours.