

## **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 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:**

Members:

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors Amanda Davis, Louise Fox, Lisa Powell, Victoria Waplington and Jane Yates.

Officers: Jim Fieldsend (Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management & Enforcement), Cathy Ford (Tenant Participation Officer), Lesley Botham (Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager), Kath Drury (Information, Engagement & Performance Manager), Kellie Bradford (Improvement Officer) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

### **CS01-23/24            APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Rita Turner.

### **CS02-23/24            URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **CS03-23/24            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **CS04-23/24            MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

Moved by Councillor Victoria Waplington and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### **CS05-23/24            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 Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis

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

### **CS06-23/24                    WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2023/24. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer explained that the programme was a fluid document which could be added to and amended as required. The programme was considered as part of every meeting to allow Committee Members to adjust to emerging issues throughout the year.

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Victoria Wapplington  
**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme 2022/23 be approved and noted.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

### **CS07-23/24                    CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS/ COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022/23 1ST JANUARY 2023 TO 31ST MARCH 2023 AND ANNUAL SUMMARY**

The Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager presented the Q4 2022-23 report and the Annual Summary for 2022/23.

Key points of note were:

- The Revenues & Benefits target for answering of incoming calls had been exceeded for both Q4 and the year as a whole.
- The Contact Centres target for answering incoming calls had been exceeded for both Q4 and then met for the year as a whole.
- Over nine thousand emails had been received by the Council in Q4, with response performance 1% below target at 99%.
- The increase in the total number of emails across 2022/23 (31,191) compared to 2021/22 (26,018) was significant.
- Live Chat continues to be a growing mechanism of communication.
- A call-back facility is being implemented for those waiting in a queue for non-urgent enquiries.
- When analysing performance against the corporate telephone standards the Council had received over 98,000 calls across the year, of which 7724 were abandoned/lost. The current target for abandoned calls was 5% of all calls received. A number of service areas however were not meeting this and officers were assessing how realistic the target was with a view to raising the target to 10% in future.
- In relation to the data gathered in Appendix 3(C), a large proportion related to Streetscene services and missed bins/missed delivery of new and replacement bins.
- The volume of MP Enquiries continues to be high with 99% responded to in time.
- There had only been 1 Ombudsman complaint across the whole year.

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A revised Policy had recently been produced and would be shared with Senior Leadership Team (SLT) shortly to ensure they were fully briefed on current policy/procedure.

A Member questioned whether staff were able to view the reports presented. The officer confirmed that it was discussed as part of team meetings.

A Member noted that the report showed a positive perspective and queried whether the Contact Centre service was currently impacted with any vacancies. The officer noted that the team was currently fully staffed, and that staff more recently recruited had almost completed their training. The team was currently recruiting to the Complaints Officer role, and it was hoped to have someone in post soon.

The Chair enquired what volume of vexatious complaints was received by the Council and how it monitored data on calls/contact, and how it protected staff who may have to deal with such complaints. The officer confirmed that within the current Policy there was a process on how to handle such complainants and protect staff. The team had recently gained approval to classify a current contact as habitual/vexatious. Such contact came to the service via all channels both written and verbal.

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Lisa Powell  
**RESOLVED** that the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaints be noted.

(Customer Services, Standards and Complaints Manager)

### **CS08-23/24            TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement and the Tenant Participation Officer presented the draft Strategy to Members. Preliminary works had been taking place on this area for the last 12 months by an internal group, as a result of the Social Housing White Paper 2020, which required Councils to overhaul their approach to tenant engagement and involvement. The Tenant Participation Review and Development Group consisted of five tenants, 5 Members and officers.

The Social Housing White Paper (2020) "The Charter for Social Housing" emphasised the importance of tenant engagement and set out what the Regulator of Social Housing required from landlords. The White Paper also outlined a set of required Tenant Satisfaction Measures, which came into force in April 2023. This placed a statutory requirement on landlords to collect tenant satisfaction data on a number of housing related areas.

The Strategy set out four clear objectives:

- To make tenants and leaseholder engagement an integral part of the housing service, ensuring that officers and contractors understood that it was a shared responsibility.
- To strengthen and develop communication methods ensuring tenants were offered a number of ways to get involved and was accessible to all.
- To be more accountable for the services that the Council delivered by empowering its tenants to challenge the Council and to get involved in setting priorities.

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- To use customer feedback to improve the Council's housing services and keep them informed about how their contributions had been used to drive continuous improvement.

The Strategy and Action Plan would be reviewed annually by the Group following approval by Executive and Council. A key aim was to increase digital and online channels of engagement, however, with 50% of tenants in older people's accommodation it was important that the Council used a variety of methods to ensure all tenants could engage.

The current draft had been approved by the Review Group and was now going out to tenants for comment as part of the upcoming newsletter. There would be a variety of ways to respond, and feedback would be reviewed further prior to submission to Executive in September.

The Chair noted that it was very important to have a variety of communication and engagement channels and that as a Council it was vital to acknowledge that not all tenants may want to engage.

Moved by Councillor Victoria Waplington and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox **RESOLVED** that (1) the draft strategy and action plan be noted,

(2) a monitoring update on the action plan be presented to scrutiny on an annual basis.

(Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement/  
Tenant Participation Officer)

### **CS09-23/24 DRAFT EQUALITY PLAN AND OBJECTIVES 2023 - 2027**

The Information, Engagement & Performance Manager, and the Improvement Officer (Equalities) presented a draft Equality Plan to Members. The Council was required under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to set equality objectives every four years. As part of producing the new plan there had been analysis of the District profile, the legal requirements placed on the Council and the current workforce profile.

The plan had three proposed objectives:

(1) Improving customer and resident insight for service planning and delivery Purposes.

This included analysing some of the satisfaction survey results by protected characteristic to check that it was like the overall result .

(2) Providing leadership and organisational commitment to actively promote Equalities.

This would include specialist advice training, regular officer/Member training and a constant review of the Council's approach.

(3) Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce

A key issue under this objective was to improve workforce data.

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The draft Plan had been submitted to Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Service managers, Council staff and external consultation (citizen's panel and website). 174 comments had been received covering a range of issues including:

- The document was clear and well laid out.
- There was support for completion of resident surveys in addition to the regular engagement programme.
- Respondents felt that the Members should operate in line with Council policy and values
- Respondents wanted to see more accessible parking at the Arc
- Respondents questioned how accessible the Bulky Waste collection service was for those with disabilities and requiring assisted bin collections, and whether consideration was given to those who could not take their waste to the curb.

A number of responses received would be considered as part of the delivery of objective 2. It was hoped to submit a final version of the plan to Executive for approval in September.

A Councillor questioned how those with protected characteristics were able to contact/refer issues to a set officer or a working group. The officer noted that there had previously been an Internal Equalities Group and the action plan included an action to re-establish that group.

A Councillor questioned how a member of staff would report an issue if they wished to keep their report anonymous. The officer noted that a usual course of action would be to go via their own service hierarchy but if that were not possible the staff member could go to HR, their Union (if a member) or use a mechanism as defined by the Whistleblowing Policy.

A Councillor noted that in relation to Hate Crime, incidents had increased significantly within the District and the Enforcement Team involved with a number of these incidents. The Councillor was aware of a number of shops in Bolsover selling racist material. They were aware that High Peak Borough Council had put a local policy in place to advocate for businesses not to sell certain items. They offered to share this with officers. The officer noted that some of the responses in the consultation process had referred to the issues in Bolsover centre and that these issues could be dealt with under the new objective two as a separate piece of work.

Moved by Councillor Amanda Davis and seconded by Councillor Jane Yates  
**RESOLVED** that (1) the draft plan and objectives be noted,

(2) details of the approach taken by High Peak Borough Council be shared with officers.

(Information, Engagement & Performance Manager/  
Improvement Officer (Equalities))

**CS10-23/24**

### **REVIEW OF MEMBERS ICT & SUPPORT AND ICT SERVICE DELIVERY – EXECUTIVE RESPONSE**

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer updated Members on the review recently completed by the outgoing Committee. The recommendations had all been approved by Executive for

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implementation. Members now needed to determine which Members would be interested in linking to the Member ICT Working Group so that core work relating to Members ICT equipment and Chamber equipment could be progressed.

Moved by Councillor Amanda Davis and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox.

**RESOLVED** that (1) Executive's Response to the Review of Members ICT & Support and ICT Service Delivery be noted,

(2) the report and findings be made public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's 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 Council's Constitution.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:54 hours and Members then met as a working party to agree their programme of review work for the year. The working party concluded at 11:36 hours.