

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 20th November 2023 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors:- Louise Fox, Phil Smith, and Vicky Waplington.

Officers Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Amar Bashir (Improvement Officer) (to Minute No. CS33-23/24), Chris Fridlington (Director - Economic Development) (to Minute No. CS33-23/24), Natalie Etches (Head of Business Growth, Dragonfly Management Ltd) (to Minute No. CS33-23/24), Chris McKinney (Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing) (to Minute No. CS33-23/24), Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Standards & Complaints Manager) (to Minute No. CS34-23/24), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer) (to Minute No. CS34-23/24), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement) (to Minute No. CS35-23/24), Lisa Evans (Housing Allocations Manager) (to Minute No. CS35-23/24), and Alison Bluff (Governance).

CS27-23/24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Lisa Powell.

CS28-23/24. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS29-23/24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS30-23/24. MINUTES – 25TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Donna Hales
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 25th September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

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CS31-23/24. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Moved by Councillor Donna Hales and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

CS32-23/24. NEW COUNCIL AMBITION 2024-2028 – SCRUTINY CONSULTATION

Committee's consideration was sought for the Council's proposed new Council Ambition 2024-2028.

Under the current Council Ambition (2020-2024): there were three aims; Customers, Economy, and Environment. These aims would carry forward on to the proposed new Council Ambition 2024-2028, with a fourth and a fifth aim being added;

- **(4) Housing - by delivering social and private sector housing growth.**
- **(5) Bolsover, Our Future.**

The Improvement Officer took Committee through the actions which would help deliver the priorities under the aims. Members provided feedback and raised questions to which officers provided a response.

The Director - Economic Development, explained that the objective of the new fifth ambition, **Bolsover, Our Future**, was to align the Council's priorities with what would be coming forward with the East Midlands County Combined Authority (EMCCA). Five themes would be worked to under the fifth aim; transport, land and housing, net zero, business innovation, employment and skills.

The Improvement Officer advised Members that the new Council Ambition would be considered by the other three themed Scrutiny Committees and feedback provided to Senior Leadership Team for review. A report would then be presented to the Executive, with a final report to Council for adoption of the new Ambition 2024-2028.

Moved by Councillor Donna Hales and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Improvement Officer, the Director - Economic Development, the Head of Business Growth, Dragonfly Management Ltd, the Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing, left the meeting.

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CS33-23/24. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2023/24 (QUARTER 2) 1ST JULY 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2023

Committee considered a report which provided information regarding performance in relation to the Council's Customer Service Standards, and the effective management of complaints.

Appendix 1 and 2 to the report provided a quarterly breakdown of the key customer service standards, as detailed below, together with the target and the cumulative performance for each standard;

- Incoming calls - to be answered within 20 seconds
- E-mails - target 1: 100% to be acknowledged within 1 working day, and target 2: 100% to be replied to within 8 working days
- Live chat (Contact Centres) - target - 75% of incoming Live Chats to be answered within 20 seconds
- Unanswered Calls (Abandoned) - Target 10%

Formal Investigation (stage two): Appendix 3 (D,E) showed the number of formal investigation complaints and M.P. enquiries received by department. Members were asked to note that 100% of formal complaints and 100% MP enquiries had been responded to within the Council's customer service standard of 15 working days. This target was well above the 95% for both Stage 2 and MP responses, and was the first quarter in which this had been achieved since Q3 2021/22. The Customer Service, Standards & Complaints Manager noted that this was down to the good work of the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer.

Internal Review (stage three): Appendix 3 (F) showed the number of stage three complaints received for the Q2 period by department. These were complainants who had already made a stage two complaint but had still felt dissatisfied.

Ombudsman: Appendix 3 (F) showed 1 Ombudsman complaint had been received for the Q2 period and a decision had been taken by the Ombudsman to not investigate as there was not enough evidence to justify any fault in the way the Council had acted.

The Customer Service, Standards & Complaints Manager advised the meeting that a consultation process was currently underway with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman in relation to aligning their codes to form a joint code. There were seven areas of criteria where a response was required from the Council. These changes would have a big impact on the Council's corporate complaints policy regarding timeframes and processes etc. The Council's response would need to be submitted by 23rd November.

In response to a Member's query in relation to the new 'call back' service, the Customer Service, Standards & Complaints Manager advised that she would be producing some figures on this soon.

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Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith
RESOLVED that the overall performance on Customer Service Standards and Compliments, Comments and Complaint, be noted.

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

CS34-23/24. CONSULTATION ON DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Committee considered a report in relation to the revised draft Housing Allocations Policy.

It was a statutory requirement under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, for local authorities to have an allocations policy in place which outlined how social housing located within their authority would be allocated. Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England set out how allocation schemes were to be framed.

The last full review of the Council's Allocations Policy was undertaken in 2019, and formally adopted in April 2020. This moved away from a points-based system to a band system.

As demand for social housing continued to rise, it was important that the housing allocations policy provided a genuine route to access housing for households in need. The criteria to determine access to the housing register and priority banding were important.

Council housing within the District was an extremely limited resource and demand significantly outstripped supply. The Council had approximately 380 properties becoming available each financial year to meet the housing needs of applicants. It was imperative that the policy could adequately balance availability of the resource with needs that people had for rehousing into council housing.

The report outlined a number of proposed changes to the existing allocations policy, including the rationale, and also provided a proposed timeframe for completion of the public consultation. Full details were contained within the Appendix 'summary of changes' document attached to the report. The changes proposed may mean that some households who did not have a housing need were no longer eligible to access social housing via the Council's Housing Register. A full equality impact assessment would be carried out as part of the consultation phase.

The Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement advised Members that Housing would also be actively promoting the Mutual Exchange Register. This was a service where anyone in a housing association property or council housing property could register to swap properties with someone else.

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The Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement added that an online questionnaire was available on the Council's website in relation to the revised Allocations Policy and encouraged Members to complete the survey.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox
RESOLVED that the revised Housing Allocations Policy be noted.

The Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement and the Housing Allocations Manager left the meeting.

CS35-23/24. REVIEW OF MEMBERS ICT & SUPPORT AND ICT SERVICE DELIVERY: INTERIM MONITORING REPORT

Committee considered a report which provided progress to date against the recommendations made from the Review of Members ICT & Support and ICT Service Delivery.

The initial aim of the review was to ascertain the impact of the pandemic on ICT Service delivery and review the effectiveness of Member ICT equipment and support provision. However, the review was re-started in 2022/23 with the aim refocused on Member ICT equipment and support.

The Committee had undertaken a review on the following areas;

- Remote support for iPads to enable easier updates
- Member ICT equipment, Members ICT support
- Chamber/meeting room ICT equipment
- Power supply within the Council Chamber
- Creation of a Member IT Working Group
- Accessibility of mod.gov
- Access to the intranet

Committee had put together 13 recommendations which would hopefully assist the Council in improving equipment provision and support to all Members and the operation of meeting spaces within a modern post-Covid environment. All 13 recommendations had been approved by Executive at its meeting held on 3rd April 2023

The appendix to the report set out progress on the recommendations which had been completed, and the recommendations which required further work.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that 1) progress against the review recommendations be noted,

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

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3) Officers continue to implement the recommendations and submit a further report in six months' time highlighting progress and any exceptions to delivery.

(Scrutiny Officer)

CS36-23/24. CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Committee considered their work plan 2023/24.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Donna Hales

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2023/24 be noted.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 1130 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 1200 hours.