

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 November 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner (Vice-Chair), Louise Fox, Phil Smith, Vicky Waplington and Deborah Watson.

Officers:- Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Sarah Kay (Assistant Director of Planning and Planning Policy), Neil Oxby (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer), Jo Wilson (Housing Strategy and Development Officer), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor Sandra Peake, Portfolio Holder for Housing (to Minute No. CS36-24/25), and observing was Councillor Jane Yates, Junior Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing.

CS30-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Amanda Davis.

CS31-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS32-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS33-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 16th September 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

CS34-24/25 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

The Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and Items.

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RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

CS35-24/25 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2024/25 – 1ST JULY 2024 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024

The Customer Service, Complaints & Standards Manager presented the report to the Committee.

Appendixes 1 and 2 provided a breakdown of the key customer service standards by quarterly period, together with the target and the cumulative performance for each standard.

The data in the report for Quarter 2 2024/25 included:

- Revenues incoming calls answered within 20 seconds (target 70% – achieved 87%);
- Benefits incoming calls answered within 20 seconds (target 80% – achieved 94%);
- Contact Centres incoming calls answered within 20 seconds (target 80% – achieved 77%);
- Contact Centres incoming emails acknowledged within one working day (target 100% – achieved 100%);
- Contact Centres live chat answered within 20 seconds (target 90% - achieved 88%);
- Corporate Telephone Standard calls answered corporately within 20 seconds cumulatively (target 90% - achieved 92%).

The Contact Centres had achieved 77% of calls answered within 20 seconds, and not the target of 80%, due to staff shortages in the department. Staff had subsequently been recruited and were in training.

For Compliments received in Quarter 2 2024/25, 18 were received. For Comments, 11 were received. For Complaints Stage One, 99 were received. For MP Enquiries, 1 was received. For Complaints Stage Two, 2 were received. For Ombudsman Complaints, 3 were received but none were investigated (insufficient evidence of fault).

Appendix 3 detailed the Compliments, Comments, Complaints, and MP Enquiries received for Quarter 2 2024/25.

The report also detailed the Service Improvements identified for Quarter 2 2024/25.

It was noted that Customer Services would be providing the Housing Team more information on complaints as required by regulators.

An update of Code of Practices would be provided at the following Committee meeting.

A member of the public acting in a vexatious manner would soon be discussed by the Senior Leadership Team.

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The Chair thanked the Customer Services Team for the comprehensive report.

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith

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

Approved by Councillor Mary Dooley, Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.

CS36-24/25 HOUSING STRATEGY 2024-2029: FINAL DRAFT

The Portfolio Holder for Housing presented the report to the Committee.

The Council's current Housing Strategy 2021-24 (the 'Strategy') was due to expire in 2024 and a revised Strategy was required. It was proposed to run the incoming Strategy from 2024-2029 to ensure it covered the Council Plan 2024-28 and permitted the incoming Council of 2027 to formulate their own Council Plan.

The Council's outgoing Strategy had identified the following key strategic housing priorities to address highlighted challenges:

- Key Priority 1 – Providing Good Quality Housing;
- Key Priority 2 – Enabling Housing Growth; and,
- Key Priority 3 – Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People.

For the incoming Strategy, these corporate priorities would be carried forward with a fourth Key Priority added:

- Key Priority 4 – Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards and ensuring that standards and living conditions in the district contribute towards better health outcomes for all.

Attached as Appendix 1 was the proposed Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Attached as Appendix 2 was the results from a public consultation (56 respondents). The results of which were:

Priority 1 – Providing Good Quality Housing	89%
Priority 2 – Enabling Housing Growth	61%
Priority 3 – Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People	80%
Priority 4 – Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards	94%

It was noted a limited response from Parish Councils was received, and responses were not received from all District Wards.

The incoming Strategy would deliver the 10 Housing initiatives in the Corporate Plan and officers had agreed 11 broad outcomes.

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The incoming Strategy formed part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and was considered a key strategic driver for the future of the District.

Following Council adoption of the incoming Strategy, officers would develop the Action Plan and identify the core delivery team.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing informed this was the final report of the incoming Strategy to the Committee. The Housing Team were seeking final comments and/or suggested amendments prior to consideration of the Executive and Council.

A Member noted this was a comprehensive report.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing informed if Members had any questions, to let the Housing Team know.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for Housing for presenting the report.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Vicky Wappington

RESOLVED that the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee review the proposed strategy attached and the outcome of the public consultation and provide comment/suggested amendments prior to submission to Executive and Council.

Approved by Councillor Sandra Peake, Portfolio Holder for Housing

CS37-24/25 TENANCY STRATEGY

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer presented the report to the Committee.

The Tenancy Strategy was adopted in 2013 and last reviewed in 2018; it was due for further renewal. It outlined the Council's position on the following:

- Affordable Rent;
- Flexible Fixed term Tenancies;
- Discharge of Homelessness Duty by offer of accommodation in the private rented sector;
- Mutual exchanges; and,
- Succession Rights.

Under review, amendments had been identified. Key wording included:

- Changes to Mutual Exchange as a result of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and revised Consumer Regulations by Regulator of Social Housing;
- Greater clarity on the scope of the Tenancy Strategy and the national and local legislative framework;
- Updated Principles as a result of changes to the Council's Corporate Plan;
- Clarification as to who was responsible for implementation and how the Strategy would be monitored/updated;
- Expectations of Registered Providers; and,
- A glossary of terms.

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Attached at Appendix 1 was a revised draft of the Tenancy Strategy 2024-2029. This considered the changes in legislation and sought to learn from best practice elsewhere. Attached at Appendix 2 was the current Tenant Strategy 2018 for comparison.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox

RESOLVED that the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee note the proposed amendments to the Tenancy Strategy and provide feedback where necessary.

Approved by Councillor Sandra Peake, Portfolio Holder for Housing

CS38-24/25 CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme attached at Appendix 1 (a fluid document where items could be added and removed at the Committee's request).

It was noted a Review of Effectiveness of Council's Waste Collection and Disposal Education – (Post Scrutiny Monitoring Update) would be provided at the next meeting.

An informal Joint Committee meeting with the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee would also be taking place in relation to The Arc's security.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer informed, due to a delay, the Housing Team's Domestic Violence Policy would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:19 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:35 hours.