

## **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, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Vicky Waplington in the Chair

Councillors Amanda Davis (Vice-Chair), Louise Fox, Jeanne Raspin and Rita Turner.

Officers:- Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager), Kellie Bradford (Information and Engagement Manager), Pam Coogan (Housing Innovation and Rents Manager), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement), Chris McKinney (Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing), Neil Oxby (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Jo Wilson (Housing Strategy and Development Officer), Coby Bunyan (Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting, observing, were Councillors Mary Dooley (Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing) and Cathy Jeffery (Junior Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing).

### **CS31-25/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Emma Stevenson.

### **CS32-25/26 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

The Scrutiny Officer informed the report attached to the supplementary document would be discussed as an item of business (CS36-25/26).

### **CS33-25/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **CS34-25/26 MINUTES**

To a question on CS26-25/26, "*Where a stair lift was required in a block of flats this would only be considered following a feasibility and fire risk assessment*", the Assistant Director of Housing Management and Enforcement informed the Council would pursue alternate accommodation if possible before initiating such a request (to deliver value for money).

Moved by Councillor Jeanne Raspin and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2025 be approved as a true and correct record.

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### **CS35-25/26 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

The Committee considered the updated List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private (provided as a handout at the meeting).

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

### **CS36-25/26 DATA PROTECTION POLICY 2025**

The Information and Engagement Manager presented the supplementary report to the Committee.

The Council took the security and privacy of data seriously and was committed to being transparent in the collection and use of personal data to meet its data protection obligations.

The Data Protection Policy 2025 (the 'Policy') was attached at Appendix 1 and set out the Council's commitment to data protection and individual rights in relation to personal data and sensitive personal data.

It explained how the Council would hold and process personal information and explained individuals' rights in relation to their data.

The Policy applied to all employees, Members, contractors, apprentices, agency staff and unpaid volunteers and those on work experience. It covered all personal data collected and used on paper and electronically. It covered the Council's corporate databases, network, video and photographs, voice recordings, CCTV, Body Worn Video and mobile devices.

After review by the Committee, the Policy would be submitted to Executive for additional noting.

The meeting was briefly adjourned for Members to review the supplementary document.

The Information and Engagement Manager informed that with the Policy being a new document, there was a no track changes version for Members to compare.

It was noted the previous document was a joint policy with North East Derbyshire District Council. Since its commencement, data protection legislation had moved forward considerably (e.g. UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018). The Policy addressed this new legislation.

Members were informed the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Information and Engagement Manager would be responsible for data protection at the Council and it was important the Council complied with UK legislation.

It was stated the Policy would prove robust containing many updates (including on the safety of children).

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The Committee felt it appropriate to cross reference the Policy with the 3 documents mentioned within it.

The Information and Engagement Manager stated the other documents referenced were close to their final draft and could be attached with the Policy at a future meeting.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox

**RESOLVED** that the item be deferred to a future meeting for the attachment of all relevant documents mentioned in the Data Protection Policy 2025.

### **CS37-25/26          CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2025/26 - 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2025 TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025**

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager presented the report to the Committee to provide information on the Council's performance in relation to its customer service standards and the number of Compliments, Comments and Complaints received for Quarter 2 2025/26 (1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025).

A breakdown of the key customer service standards by quarterly period, together with the target and the cumulative performance for each standard, was attached at Appendixes 1 and 2 of the report.

Revenues had achieved 88% of incoming calls answered within 20 seconds for Quarter 2 2025/26 (target 70%).

Benefits had achieved 90% of incoming calls answered within 20 seconds for Quarter 2 2025/26 (target 80%).

In Quarter 2 2025/26, Revenues and Benefits had received 4,090 emails – all acknowledged within 1 working day.

For Quarter 2 2025/26, Contact Centres had achieved: 77% of incoming calls answered within 20 seconds (target 75%); abandoned 2% of incoming calls (target less than 3%); and the average waiting time was 31 seconds (target not exceeding 30 seconds).

In the same period, Contact Centres had acknowledged all 8,270 email enquiries received within 1 working day (meeting the target of 100%), with 99.9% of emails replied to within 8 working days (target was 100%).

Contact Centres had answered 99% of incoming Live Chats within 20 seconds for Quarter 2 2025/26 (target 90%), with 557 chats answered out of 562 in total. In Quarter 2 2025/26, all 4 Contact Centres and The Arc's Meet & Greet Reception Desk had received 7,300 visitors.

Face-to-face monitoring would take place week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to measure waiting times.

68 Compliments had been received during Quarter 2 2025/26, with Go! Active receiving 10 Customer Feedback Form Compliments within this time.

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10 Comments had been received with all acknowledged and passed to the respective department within the target time of 5 working days during Quarter 2 2025/26. Go! Active had received 22 Customer Feedback Form Comments within this time.

76 Stage 1 Complaints had been recorded in Quarter 2 2025/26, with 12 M.P. Enquiries received during the same period. 100% of Stage 1 Complaints and 100% M.P. Enquiries had been responded to within the Council's Customer Service Standard of 10 working days – the average response time for Stage 1 Complaints was 5 working days.

11 Stage 2 Complaints had been recorded in Quarter 2 2025/25. 100% of Stage 2 Complaints had been responded to within the Council's Customer Service Standard of 20 working days – the average response time for Stage 2 Complaints was 15 working days.

1 Local Government Ombudsman Complaint had been received for investigation during Quarter 2 2025/26 – no fault was found.

The report further detailed the service improvements made ("*The pedestrian gates will be locked at the same time as the main car park gate going forward*") was 1 of the examples provided to the Committee) following receipt of applicable Comments and Complaints.

To a question on reference nos. 7863, 7823 and 7833 within service improvements which all had the same improvement detailed, the Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager informed 7863 and 7823 were appropriate but would investigate 7833 and report back to the Committee.

A Member informed of a constituent who had submitted a Complaint – it had been handled swiftly but no attempt was made to inform the constituent the situation had been resolved (only an acknowledgment email had been received). It was asked if further contact could have been made to reassure the constituent that their issue had been swiftly and successfully resolved.

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager accepted the above and would review if a follow up call could have been possible / could be provided in future.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing informed some Members had attended a recent Housing Ombudsman Seminar held in Leeds with 200-300 other attendees – this seminar had highlighted how appropriate the Council worked on providing good service and how it sought to improve where possible.

It was recommended Members attend Clowne or any of the Contact Centres if given the time to see the excellent ongoing work being undertaken / achieved.

The Chair approved of the continuous improvements being made at the Council.

Moved by Councillor Jeanne Raspin and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox

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

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### **CS38-25/26 HOUSING STRATEGY - MONITORING UPDATE**

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

The quality of people's homes was strongly related to economic prosperity and minimising the adverse effects of poor housing remained a major challenge.

Damp, mould, cold, and overcrowded conditions could lead to physical illness. There was also increasing evidence poor housing conditions could seriously affect people's mental health and sense of wellbeing.

The percentage of households who owned their own homes in the District fell from 67.0% to 66.0% between 2011 to 2021. 17.2% of households rented privately in 2021, up from 13.0% in 2011. Population growth between 2011 and 2021 was 5.8%. 16.3% of households lived in socially rented housing in 2021 compared to 18.2% in 2011.

The Housing Strategy 2024-2029 aimed to deliver the corporate priorities related to the Housing aim as set out in the Council's corporate plan.

The Strategy's 4 priorities (detailed in the attached Appendix 1) were:

- Priority 1: Providing Good Quality Housing;
- Priority 2: Enabling Housing Growth (the Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing and Principal Planning Policy Officer were in attendance to provide additional information to the Committee on this if required);
- Priority 3: Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People; and,
- Priority 4: Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards and ensuring that standards and living conditions in the District contributed towards better health outcomes for all.

Following approval of the Strategy in 2024, a range of activity had progressed.

The Strategy was delivered in partnership across Housing Management, Housing Options, Environmental Health, and Planning Policy.

Progress against each of the Strategy's 4 priorities were detailed in the attached Appendix 2.

Key achievements for Priority 1 included: completion of the Stock Condition Survey by Savills – 92.7% surveyed; refresh of the Tenant Engagement Strategy following the Consumer Standards inspection; completion of Woburn House, Blackwell; completion of phase 1 Woburn Close, Blackwell; and the commencement of Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund programme.

Key achievements for Priority 2 included: maintaining a 5-year housing supply (currently 5.69 years' worth); the review of Custom and Self-Build supply and demand in relation to October 2025 had been completed (the analysis identified there was a shortfall in the supply of CSB sites within the District); etc.

Key achievements for Priority 3 included: ongoing delivery of the Derbyshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027; active partner in the quarterly Derbyshire Homelessness Forum; development and launch of Street Support Derbyshire;

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development and adoption of the Housing Domestic Abuse Policy; etc.

Key achievements for Priority 4 included: development and launch of in-house Design and Contract Management Service for Disabled Facilities Grants; ongoing delivery of Affordable Warmth Coordinator post; review of Council webpages signposting advice, guidance and grants for home energy improvements; ongoing delivery of Private Sector Housing Strategy; etc.

The immediate plans for future delivery of Priority 1 included: completion of the stock condition survey on outstanding properties and a roll-out of an ongoing approach to stock surveys; approval and implementation of a revised 30-year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan; completion of the build at Woburn Close, Blackwell; completion of the build at Alder Close, Shirebrook; etc.

The immediate plans for future delivery of Priority 2 included: approval of the Shirebrook Growth Plan; complete further analysis to inform the Council's approach to supply for Custom and Self-Build sites; completion of a benchmarking exercise on neighbouring and good practice approaches to tackling empty homes; and development of approach to enable the Council to address a minimum of 12 empty homes per annum.

The immediate plans for future delivery of Priority 3 included: achieve accreditation of Bolsover Lifeline Services; and development and implementation of a Supported Housing Strategy for the area.

The immediate plan for future delivery of Priority 4 was the successful delivery of year 1 Warm Homes: Local Grant programme.

A Member was always impressed at stakeholder engagement efforts made by the Council and thanked the officer for the report. Reservations were expressed on the use of the term "vulnerable" which could hold negative connotations (it could be seen as disempowering or have the Council unintentionally label someone as "weak"). It was asked if the Council could consider using an alternate descriptor / language.

Moved by Councillor Jeanne Raspin and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner  
**RESOLVED** that Members review the attached Delivery Plan, progress made to date and plans for the immediate future.

### **CS39-25/26 RENT COLLECTION POLICY - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement presented the report to the Committee. The Housing Innovation and Rents Manager was also in attendance to answer any questions.

The Council owned and managed its housing stock (4,900 properties as of November 2025).

All Council tenants had signed a tenancy agreement, setting out their and the Council's rights and responsibilities.

The agreement stated that tenants should pay their rent on a weekly basis. The Council could apply for Possession as set out in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as may be

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amended from time to time) if tenants failed to pay their rent and fell into arrears.

The Rent Collection Policy (the 'Policy') explained the Council's approach to prevention and collection of rent arrears. In summary the Council would take a firm but fair approach, ensuring tenants had available financial expertise to resolve any difficulties.

The Council would not tolerate tenants who were unwilling to pay their debt nor receive help. Legal action would be taken where necessary.

The current Policy was 3 years old and due for renewal. It had been reviewed and updated to reflect changes. The updated policy was attached at Appendix 1 (amendments / additions were shown with track changes).

The report detailed the changes made to the Policy.

The Equality Act 2010's assessment and wording throughout the document had also been updated.

The Policy was aimed at Tenants and so the language and layout had been changed to reflect this. Information for officers had been removed (so if officer work procedures needed altering if required, the whole Policy would not need reviewing and delaying work by up to 6 months).

The Chair praised the good work achieved and stated it was appropriate to remove the officer information from the Policy (reviewing the Policy every time a slight procedure change was required was not a viable option).

Moved by Councillor Jeanne Raspin and seconded by Councillor Louise fox

**RESOLVED** that Scrutiny Members review the attached updated Policy documents and provide comments for consideration as part of the renewal process.

*Councillor May Dooley, the Information and Engagement Manager, and Councillor Cathy Jeffery and the Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager left the meeting at 10:47 hours, 10:48 hours and 10:49 hours respectively.*

### **CS40-25/26      JOINT REVIEW OF SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AT THE ARC: POLICIES, PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES (FIRST INTERIM REPORT)**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Post-Scrutiny Monitoring (Interim Report) to the Committee.

The Committee, along with the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee, had agreed to undertake a joint review of security arrangements at The Arc, Clowne, focussing on the policies, protocols and procedures in place and to examine how security for staff, the public and Members could be improved as part of the Work Programme 2024/25.

The joint review had put together 11 recommendations to assist the Council in improving security and safety arrangements at The Arc, Clowne.

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To date: 5 out of 11 recommendations had been achieved; 6 were on track and would likely be completed within their original target date; and no recommendation target dates had been extended.

The 5 targets achieved were:

- that the Council introduce a clear security responsibility framework;
- that the Council ensured there were clear roles and responsibilities for security procedures and incident response at The Arc, Clowne;
- that the Council considered strengthening perimeter security for external physical threats such as vehicle mitigation;
- that the Council addressed security arrangements for committee meetings held at The Arc, Clowne; and,
- that the Council conducted a security audit with a Counter Terrorism Security Advisor.

The Executive's response to the Review of Security Arrangements at The Arc: Policies, Protocols and Procedures was attached at Appendix 1.

The Post Scrutiny Monitoring Report – Review of Security Arrangements at The Arc: Policies, Protocols and Procedures was attached at Appendix 2.

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis

**RESOLVED** that: 1) Scrutiny Members note the progress against the review recommendations;

- 2) Scrutiny Members acknowledge any exceptions to delivery and clarify the additional action required by the service;
- 3) Scrutiny Members make its report and findings public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's Constitution; and,
- 4) Officers continue to implement the recommendations and submit a further report in six months' time highlighting progress and any exceptions to delivery.

### **CS41-25/26      CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme 2025/26 to the Committee.

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

**RESOVLED** that Members review this report and the Programme attached at Appendix 1 for approval and amendment as required. All Members are advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer should they have any queries regarding future meetings.

The Chair thanked all those in attendance.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:49 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work.