

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday 2nd December 2019 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

Councillors Jane Bryson, Ann Clarke, Tricia Clough, Paul Cooper, David Dixon, Ray Heffer, Rita Turner and Andrew Joesbury.

Officers:- Karen Hanson (Strategic Director – Place) (to Minute No. 0497), Matt Broughton (Head of Partnerships and Transformation) Ann Bedford (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer) (to Minute No.0495), Di Bonsor (Housing Needs Manager) (to Minute No. 0497), Di Parker (Housing Policy & Intelligence Officer) (to Minute No. 0497), Pam Coogan (Housing Innovation Officer) (to Minute No. 0497) and Alison Bluff (Governance Officer)

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillors Mary Dooley (Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Transformation) and Sandra Peake (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety).

0489. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

0490. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

0491. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

0492. MINUTES – 4TH NOVEMBER 2019

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 4th November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

0493. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

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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0494. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2019/20 – 1ST APRIL 2019 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019

Committee considered a report which provided detailed information on the Council's performance in relation to its customer service standards and management of complaints for the period 1st April 2019 to 30th September 2019.

Telephones – Target - 93% to be answered within 20 seconds

The report identified that 98% of incoming calls were being answered corporately within 20 seconds cumulatively. Only Streetscene Services narrowly missed the target in Q1 (92%).

E-mails - Target 1 - 100% to be acknowledged within 1 working day and Target 2 - 100% to be replied to within 8 working days

7,459 email enquiries (3,750 in Q1 and 3,709 in Q2) from the public were received through enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk and all were acknowledged within one working day with 99% replied to in full within 8 working days.

Face to face monitoring - Target – 99% not kept waiting longer than 20 minutes at a Contact Centre

Waiting times were monitored during week commencing 15th July 2019 were 813 customers called into the Contact Centres, 812 of which (99.88%) waited less than 20 minutes to be served. During the same period, 199 callers were served on Meet & Greet at The Arc, Clowne, bringing the total number of callers served during week commencing 15th July 2019 to 1,012.

Compliments

In total, 111 written compliments were received (this was a slight decrease on the same period in 2018/19 where 123 compliments were received). A good cross section of compliments were received from customers appreciating excellent service, including 23 for Housing, 22 for Streetscene Services, 18 for Leisure, 16 for Planning and 14 for Customer Services (Contact Centres). As there were some compliments which cross cut departments, the total did not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

Members were asked to note that where exceptional praise was received for a member of staff, or a team/department, these were highlighted on the Council's Extranet. Where a member of staff, or a team/department had gone over and above the call of duty, the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer would discuss with their relevant manager to nominate them for an employee award.

Comments

Sixteen comments were acknowledged and passed to the respective department within the target time of 3 working days. Some comments raised valid issues and cross cut departments, as such they were responded to corporately and as previously stated, the total did not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

Complaints

Frontline resolution (stage one)

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Frontline resolution complaints received by the Contact Centre were recorded on the Customer Information System (Firmstep) and other Contact Centre systems, by department. The customer service standard for responding to these complaints was 3 working days.

Formal Investigation (stage two)

98 Formal Investigation complaints were received during the period. 97 (99%) were responded to within the customer service standard of 15 working days, the remaining 1 was partly regarding a service provided by another organisation and was responded to within 19 working days. As some complaints cross cut departments, the total did not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way. The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer noted that very few formal complaints had been received with regard to the New Bolsover regeneration work but she would like to see any future complaints come via the formal corporate complaint route.

Internal Review (stage three)

Stage three complainants were complainants who had made a stage two complaint but still felt dissatisfied. During this period, 28 stage three complaints were received, 93% (26) of which were responded to within standard. As some complaints cross cut departments, the total did not correspond with the total above when viewed in this way.

Ombudsman

During the period and up to 18th November 2019, 8 decisions were received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman of 'closed after initial enquiries', 1 of 'not upheld, no maladministration' and 1 of 'upheld, maladministration and injustice'. This last complaint was complex and the criticism related to a delay in putting the person back on the housing waiting list. One decision of 'close the case' from the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and another of 'close the case' for a review of the same complaint, was also received.

A Member commented that she and another Member had witnessed a customer being served at the Clowne Contact Centre and was concerned at the lack of privacy for customers, especially when dealing with delicate matters. The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer replied that signs were displayed in all Contact Centres that any customer wishing to speak in privacy could request this with the Customer Service Advisor. The Head of Partnerships and Transformation added that he would look at improving the promotion of privacy for customers in all Contact Centres. Another Member commented that if a customer needed more than 20 minutes to be served, then they should be allocated the time that they needed.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the overall performance on compliments/comments and complaints and customer service standards be noted.

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.

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0495. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT THE VISION FOR 2019-2023

Committee considered a draft paper which set out the Leader's vision for the Authority over the next 4 years.

The Council's current Corporate Plan 2015-2019 was ready for review, however, the Leader of the Council did not want to create the normal Corporate Plan for 2019-2023 but wanted the Authority to be more dynamic, self-sufficient and flexible in its approach and not limited by targets. A Council that delivered excellent services, whilst adapting to local aspirations and acting as the economic and environmental driver for Bolsover District.

The vision would be followed by annual reports of what had been achieved and what was aimed to be achieved in the forthcoming year. It would have the scope for new projects to be delivered to address uncertainties such as reduction in funding and income the Council received, changes in legislation that affected the Council's services or influences that affected the local communities and their way of life.

Projects implemented to help achieve this vision would be subject to revision as the Council continued to respond to the changing needs of the District.

The Leader wanted Scrutiny Committees to play a bigger part in helping out with his 4 year vision and a workshop would be held in early 2020.

The 4 year vision would be presented to Executive in December for approval to enable the development of the framework.

Members welcomed the Leader's vision as set out in the draft paper.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor David Dixon

RESOLVED that the draft paper which set out the Leader's vision for the Authority over the next four years be noted.

0496. DRAFT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY CONSULTATION AND PROGRESS UPDATE

Committee's views were sought with regard to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, which was currently being reviewed.

The Housing Allocations Policy provided a framework on how the Council allocated its housing stock. It applied to both new applicants and existing council/social housing tenants who wished to transfer to another property.

The Policy worked in line with other relevant Council policies including the Mutual Exchange Policy and the Succession Policy and had due regard to current legislation and any subsequent amendments. The Housing Needs Manager added that the current bands and points system in the Choice Based Lettings Policy would also need amending. This was currently being worked on and would be presented to a future meeting of Committee.

Two key areas in the Policy which had been reviewed related to Care Leavers and the Armed Forces. With regard to Care Leavers, although this was a Derbyshire County Council (DCC) function, a Care Leavers Offer was now in the Policy, however, DCC would

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need to liaise with the Council on each case. With regard to the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Covenant was now more prominent in the Policy and worked to let ex-service personnel and their families access the Housing list.

In response to a Member's question regarding landlord references, the Housing Needs Manager noted that if for any reason a prospective tenant could not provide a reference from a previous landlord, there were other checks that Housing officers could carry out, for example, bank statement checks to see if their rent had been paid each month. The Housing Policy & Intelligence Officer added that bank statements were also used as proof of identification as living at an address.

In relation to rent affordability checks, the Housing Innovation Officer added that the Housing application form had been amended to include a breakdown of a prospective tenants' income and expenditure.

In response to a Member's query, the Housing Needs Manager advised Committee that all stakeholders, including people on the housing waiting list, would be consulted on the revised Policy throughout December 2019 and January 2020. Feedback from the consultation exercise would be presented to Members at a future Scrutiny meeting along with the final version of the Policy.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the draft Housing Allocations policy be noted.

The Strategic Director – Place, the Housing Needs Manager, the Housing Policy & Intelligence Officer, the Housing Innovation Officer, Councillors Dooley and Peake, left the meeting.

0497. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Committee considered their Work Programme 2019/20.

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer noted that the new framework in relation to the Leader's vision for the Authority over the next 4 years would be discussed in more detail at the February 2020 meeting of Committee, via a workshop style session.

The draft reports in relation to the Committee's reviews would be considered in the New Year.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.

0498. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer
RESOLVED that the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the following item of business to avoid the disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006).

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0499. SUBMISSIONS TO TRANSFORMATION GOVERNANCE GROUP EXEMPT PARAGRAPH 3

Committee considered a report which set out a proposal for a scheme which would help the Council meet its climate change strategies whilst also generating an income for the Authority.

The project cost could be either funded by the Council, part funded, or the accommodation required in relation to the project, rented out on a commercial basis.

The staff for installation would be sourced by the nominated contractor and any maintenance would also be managed by them. Once installed, the project would need little to no staffing as it would be monitored remotely.

Members asked questions to which the Head of Partnerships and Transformation replied.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

As this was the last formal meeting of the Committee in 2019, the Chair and Vice Chair wished everyone a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

The formal meeting concluded at 1100 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 1125 hours.