

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Tuesday, 16 July 2019 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chairman
Councillor Brian Milnes – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:	Anna Bradnam	Graham Cone
	Dr. Claire Daunton	Dr. Douglas de Lacey
	Geoff Harvey	Steve Hunt
	Dr. Shrobona Bhattacharya	Jose Hales
	Clare Delderfield	

Councillors Neil Gough, Bill Handley, Philippa Hart and Aidan Van de Weyer were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:	Victoria Wallace	Scrutiny and Governance Adviser
	Peter Maddock	Deputy Head of Finance
	Sam Smith	Head of ICT
	Rachael Fox-Jackson	Customer Contact Manager
	Mike Hill	Director of Housing and Environmental Services
	Trevor Nicoll	Interim Assistant Director for Waste Resources & Special Projects

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ruth Betson, Martin Cahn, Sarah Cheung Johnson, Gavin Clayton, Peter McDonald and Judith Rippeth. Councillors Jose Hales and Clare Delderfield were present as substitutes for Councillors Rippeth and Cahn, and Councillor Shrobona Bhattacharya was present as a substitute for Councillor Betson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting. Referring to the minutes of the previous meeting, a member of the committee queried whether further work was being undertaken in relation to the 3C Shared Legal service gaining Lexcel accreditation.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

5. UPDATE ON 3C ICT

The Head of 3C ICT and the Lead Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Business Improvement were present for this agenda item and answered questions from committee members, some of which had been submitted in advance of the meeting. In response to these questions, the Lead Cabinet Member and Head of 3C ICT informed

the committee of the following:

- The Head of 3C ICT was preparing a 100 day report on the ICT service, which would be published in due course.
- Recruitment to key roles in the ICT service would be undertaken; this would include a Deputy Head of 3C ICT and an Information Governance Manager.
- Committee members had raised concern about the fragility of the ICT environment and were informed that much of this was due to legacy equipment which ICT was in the process of moving away from. Old ICT systems were failing staff but the new Council Anywhere system, which was being rolled out to all staff, was enabling staff to work more effectively.
- Many recent ICT issues at South Cambridgeshire District Council had been caused by the telephony system which was very old and the incompatibility of this had caused significant network connectivity issues. Further work was needed to resolve these issues by replacing this equipment; this was a major project which had not yet been fully commissioned by SCDC. Once commissioned, ICT would ensure this was made a priority. As the project had not yet been commissioned, the Head of 3C ICT was not in a position to provide a timescale for the project.
- There had been a lack of continual investment in ICT by South Cambridgeshire District Council and work around risk assessment and the investment needed in ICT, had been lacking.
- The 3C ICT vision of buy once use three times was emphasised and the committee was informed that where possible, procurements were being done collectively across the three councils.
- The committee was informed that there was a consolidated asset register, which was being managed.
- In relation to the recent failure of the chiller system in the South Cambridgeshire Hall server room, which had led to an outage of ICT systems across the council, the committee was informed that this was not something for which 3C ICT was responsible as the server room was managed by South Cambridgeshire Facilities Management. The Head of 3C ICT explained that this failure had occurred during a weekend.
- The newly consolidated server room environments, such as the server room at Pathfinder House which 3C ICT managed, had monitoring equipment in place.
- In response to questions raised by committee members regarding the ICT issues referenced in the Customer Contact Centre Performance report to be considered during the next agenda item, the committee was informed that 3C ICT did not support the Benefits Calculator.
- The Head of 3C ICT was working on a risk register to identify all ICT risks and where responsibility for these lay; this would be published in due course. The committee welcomed this positive response to risk assessment but expressed surprise that the Benefits Calculator and South Cambridgeshire Hall server room, both of which were critical infrastructure, were not the responsibility of 3C ICT. The Head of 3C ICT would look into the Benefits Calculator.
- The rollout of Council Anywhere had been agreed with all three councils. This project did not include the replacement of South Cambridgeshire's telephony equipment, which the Head of 3C ICT advised needed to be replaced.

In response to a query raised regarding problems being experienced with the audio visual equipment in the Council Chamber, the committee was informed that this was an issue for South Cambridgeshire to resolve and there was a project in place for this.

The Head of 3C ICT informed the committee that she would be happy to discuss with South Cambridgeshire's Facilities Management Team, systems to monitor the South Cambridgeshire Hall server room.

Regarding progress on the governance of the Shared Services, the Lead Cabinet Member informed the committee that:

- The former Interim Executive Director had made good progress on this and this work was being continued by the Interim Finance Director.
- She had not yet been involved in any Management Board meetings.
- She had not yet seen much progress in member involvement in strategic discussions regarding 3C ICT.
- She suggested that the lack of accountability had been demonstrated by the recent South Cambridgeshire Hall server room issue, and that there were gaps which needed to be bridged.
- Good progress had been made with recharging and this work was continuing.
- The appetite for greater accountability and governance seemed to be unique to South Cambridgeshire District Council and was not reciprocated by the other partner councils.
- The Head of 3C ICT informed the committee that ICT problems had been more acute at SCDC due to the issues with the telephony system, which was the oldest system across all three councils.

The Lead Cabinet Member informed the committee of the headlines from the LGA report on ICT, which were that:

- Council Anywhere would make the required step change to meet staff's needs and bring the Council up to speed with modern ways of working.
- There was a need to increase the visibility of the ICT team as a whole.

The Lead Cabinet Member informed the committee of the following:

- 13000 registrations had been made on the Customer Portal following the soft launch of this. The hard launch was scheduled for August 2019. The project was progressing well with two full time business analysts working on it.
- Pressures were being experienced by the Customer Contact Centre Team to support the channel shift to the Customer Portal.
- The Lead Cabinet Member was concerned that South Cambridgeshire District Council was not investing as much money into the project compared to partners, and suggested this needed to be looked at carefully. The Interim Assistant Director of Waste and Special Projects informed the committee that SCDC had put some more money into this project, however it was still the junior partner and officers advised that the organisation needed to invest more.
- The Interim Corporate Programme Manager was drawing together all ICT and business change programmes into a programme of work.

The Interim Chief Executive explained to the committee the original arrangements for 3C Shared Services governance, which had consisted of the following:

- Chief Executive Board meetings (strategic)
- Director Board meetings (operational)
- Leaders meetings (involving all three Council Leaders)

He pointed out that 3C ICT's governance arrangements were very different to the governance set up for the Shared Waste Service, of which SCDC was the lead member. It was not understood why 3C ICT governance had been set up without member involvement however lessons had been learnt from this and the council was actively seeking to change this.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee thanked the Head of 3C ICT for attending the meeting.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **RECOMMENDED:**

- a) That the project to renew South Cambridgeshire District Council's ageing telephony system be progressed.
- b) That the ICT infrastructure and building resilience be looked at closely.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **SUPPORTED:**

- a) The set up of a Member Board for 3C ICT following the model of the Shared Waste Service.
- b) Continual investment by the Council in ICT, to ensure systems and equipment were kept up to date.

6. CUSTOMER CONTACT SERVICE PERFORMANCE

The Lead Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Business Improvement presented the report which provided a review of the operational performance of the Customer Contact Service. The Customer Contact Manager and Deputy Head of Finance were also in attendance for this agenda item.

The Lead Cabinet Member highlighted the good career path the Contact Centre offered staff and that ICT issues had presented significant performance issues for the service. The volume of printing also impacted the Contact Centre, with one member of staff being deployed to support the reprographics service.

The Customer Contact Manager informed the committee of the following:

- The Contact Centre was trying to recruit six new staff members; it took three months to train a contact centre advisor on all council services and six months to fully train them. The full complement of staff was 25 staff members, which was standard for a council contact centre. The number of calls being received by the contact centre was also standard compared to other councils. The Benefits Manager and Customer Contact Manager were in the process of carrying out a benchmarking exercise comparing data from other councils.
- Four contact centre advisors were encouraging residents to use the Customer Portal; it was envisaged that use of the Customer Portal would reduce call volumes by 30%. However, it was pointed out to the committee that the types of calls that would be reduced by the use of the Customer Portal, were the calls that were more simple in nature and shorter in duration. The Customer Contact Manager anticipated it would take 5-6 years for the benefit of the Customer Portal to be fully realised.
- Contact centre advisors took their time with customers on the phone, some of which were vulnerable. Advisors were also being proactive with residents, notifying them of other services while they were on the phone; this increased call times and the call abandonment rate.
- January to March were peak call times and the service tried to backfill in order to build resilience for this busy time; this had however become difficult due to the competitive employment market. Work was taking place to streamline back office functions, which would help with capacity.
- The unexpected May 2019 EU Elections had presented challenges for the Contact Centre and had led to an increase in call volumes.
- The Contact Centre Manager explained a number of issues which had impacted the performance of the Contact Centre; telephony issues had led to increased call volumes, call waiting times and call abandonment rates. Issues with generic emails had also impacted the Contact Centre's performance and had led to some targets regarding complaints being missed.
- When ICT issues were being experienced, the Contact Centre, which used BT Cloud, had to revert back to a switchboard system to be able to answer calls.

Although calls could be answered, advisors could not fully serve customers as back office information required could not be accessed.

- In response to a request from a committee member for a standard deviation rather than averages being given in performance data, the Customer Contact Manager advised that the Contact Centre's software only provided averages. This would however change with the introduction of a new telephony system, the purchase of which was being looked at in preparation for the contract with BT Cloud ending in July 2020. The new system would be used across all three partner councils.
- The Customer Contact Manager had been working with HR to look at ways to improve the recruitment programme, looking at models used elsewhere. An issue with this council was that it had a rural base, requiring access to a mode of transport to get to, which was an additional cost out of salary. Members were informed that this council did not receive applications from students. The Contact Centre was advertising widely and looking at a rolling quarterly advertisement.
- The Contact Centre offered an entry level role for staff to access jobs in other parts of the council; the challenges this presented for the Contact Centre were explained.

A member of the committee suggested the Contact Centre look to the local community of Cambourne from which to recruit, suggesting local social media forums, the residents magazine and websites were used to advertise vacancies. The Customer Contact Manager would liaise with the HR Coordinator regarding this.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted the report and thanked the Customer Contact Manager and Deputy Head of Finance for attending the meeting, and informing the committee of the work of the Contact Centre and the challenges it faced.

7. STATUTORY SCRUTINY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman introduced the report which provided an overview of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny. The Council's performance in relation to this was discussed by the committee. The importance of forward planning and engaging with the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at an earlier stage in policy development and bringing issues to the committee for discussion further in advance of final decisions being made by Cabinet to enable effective scrutiny, was emphasised.

Committee members emphasised the following:

- The importance of having a Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman who was an opposition party member.
- The need for post decision as well as pre-decision scrutiny.

Committee members supported the idea of holding some meetings in the community and the options for doing so for a future meeting would be looked into.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted the report.

8. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted its work programme and was informed by the Chairman that the set up of a Gypsy and Traveller task and finish group, which had been raised by Councillor Gavin Clayton, would be discussed at the next meeting which Councillor Clayton could attend.

9. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 20th August 2019 at 5.20pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.
