

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 6 November 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Roger Hickford – Chairman
Councillor Jose Hales – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: David Bard Lynda Harford
Philippa Hart Douglas de Lacey
Bunty Waters Kevin Cuffley

Councillors Simon Edwards, Mick Martin, David Whiteman-Downes, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell and Nick Wright were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers: Alex Colyer Executive Director (Corporate Services)
Dawn Graham Benefits Manager
Jean Hunter Chief Executive
Richard May Policy and Performance Manager
Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer
Graham Watts Democratic Services Team Leader

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Morgan and Councillor Alison Elcox. Councillor Kevin Cuffley was present as a substituted for Councillor Elcox.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2014 were agreed, subject to the following amendments:

- Councillor Jose Hales was not present at the meeting.
- The date on page three under Minute 5 should be November 2015, not November 2014.

Matters arising:

- Mears – The Democratic Services Team Leader informed the committee that feedback from Mears was awaited regarding how it had reviewed its complaints procedure. Councillor Bunty Waters requested this be brought forward and raised concerns over the way Mears contracted out to another company. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman asked Councillor Waters to investigate this further and to bring the issue back to the committee in future if necessary. Councillor Lynda Harford raised an issue that had been brought to her attention, of Mears having invoiced for works that had not been carried out. The Democratic Services Team Leader would liaise with Councillors Harford and Waters to establish whether Mears needed to come back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were received.

5. CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Councillor David Whiteman-Downes, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, presented an update on the Contact Centre's performance.

Councillor Whiteman-Downes clarified that under paragraph five of the report, the volume of calls 'answered' at first point of contact should have been the volume of calls 'resolved' at first point of contact.

Members were informed that the call answering target was two minutes and that this was the original target set for the service. This could be reviewed if it was found to be too long.

Comments and discussion ensued:

- Councillor de Lacey suggested that the mean plus standard deviation should be provided in the figures at Appendix A.
- Councillor Whiteman-Downes highlighted that 82% of queries answered by the Contact Centre, were resolved at first point of contact.
- Councillor Harford informed the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, that she had waited 18 minutes for her call to be answered by the Contact Centre.
- Concern was expressed that issues with IT could be underpinning problems with the Contact Centre and preventing officers from being able to deliver the quality of service they wanted to provide.
- The Committee was informed that Revenues staff had been handling calls regarding revenues. This had taken 400 calls away from the Contact Centre.
- The Committee was informed that making the Council's website the first point of contact for residents, continued to be a focus. The 'Digital by Default' project was explained; this would result in residents with an email address having to opt out of accessing Council services online.
- Electronic Forms were queried. Members were informed that the development of e-forms was part of the Contact Centre's improvement plan and further information would be provided regarding this, in the Contact Centre report to the January 2015 meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.
- Members were keen for a 'missed bins' e-form to be made available for residents on the website.
- The Committee was informed that problems over Christmas were being anticipated with the reduction in green bin waste collection. Contingencies would be put in place in the Contact Centre and on the website. There would be a voice message when resident's called the Contact Centre, informing them of current issues, directing them to the Council's website and also providing the option to speak to someone directly. The rota for Contact Centre over the Christmas period would be based on the call volumes received over Christmas 2013.
- Members were informed that they were welcome to sit in the Contact Centre to listen to calls and observe the challenges the Contact Centre staff faced.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council and Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder, suggested the following information should be included in the data in

Appendix A of the report:

- The average waiting time before the caller hung up.
- An indication of the number of repeat calls.

Councillor Edwards also advised that the call wrap time of 2 minutes 53 seconds was very high and the reason/s for this should be established.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder for the interim Contact Centre report, and looked forward to the January 2015 report to the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the report

6. QUARTERLY POSITION STATEMENT ON FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The Portfolio Holders for Finance and Staffing, and Corporate and Customer Services presented the Council's Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk. This would be presented to Cabinet on 13 November 2014 and provided a statement on the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital budgets, corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategic risks.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services presented the risks and discussion and questions ensued:

- The Portfolio Holder clarified that the property company aimed to deliver a mix of high quality housing; this was reflected in the draft revised Corporate Plan.
- Councillor de Lacey raised concern that the risks associated with the shared services projects had not been added to the risk register in a timely manner. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing disagreed with this and clarified that these risks had been added to the risk register at the earliest stage.
- Staff turnover was discussed. Councillor de Lacey advised for the need to identify where staff turnover was occurring. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing agreed to look into this.
- The Executive Director (Corporate Services) informed Members that the Business Excellence Manager being recruited to the Planning Department would improve the processes within Planning. Members expressed their support for the recruitment of this post.
- Members queried whether the two additional Planning Officers being recruited were being recruited to bring the team up to the full complement of staff, or whether they were additional to existing numbers. This query could not be answered at the meeting.
- Support was expressed for developing existing staff and providing opportunities to progress within the organisation. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing referred members to the Organisational Development Strategy, which supported this.
- Estimated savings rising from changes to monthly green bin collections were queried, in light of reports from the County Council of increased costs to landfill arising from more green waste being placed into black bins which could not be composted.
- The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder assured the committee that this issue had been taken into account as part of the business case for the changes, and that the savings target remained on track.
- Councillor Martin explained the problems that had occurred with assisted bin collections when the new bin rounds had begun. The new rounds had identified that some residents receiving assisted collections had not been on the assisted

- collections register. This was being rectified.
- It was clarified that the target for affordable homes, referred to in paragraph 22 of the report, was a cumulative target.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report and supported the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out in the report.

7. SETTING THE POLICY FRAMEWORK - CORPORATE PLAN FOR 2015-2020

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services presented the updated Corporate Plan, which Cabinet would be asked to agree at its meeting on 13 November 2014.

The Committee was advised that a consortium had been formed to lobby government to prioritise improvements to the A428; Cabinet would be asked to support and participate in this work at its meeting on 13 November 2014. Consequently an additional recommendation had been added to the Cabinet report to this effect.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report and supported the recommendations to Cabinet.

8. ORCHARD PARK TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Lynda Harford, Chairman of the Orchard Park Task and Finish Group, provided a verbal update on the work of the group. The purpose of the group was to review whether Scrutiny Committee recommendations made in 2008, had been incorporated in new developments. The group was initially looking at Cambourne and Orchard Park to see how quickly recommendations had been adopted and what the effect of them had been on these communities. Two Task and Finish Group meetings had taken place and interviews would be carried out in December with external parties who had supported the communities in their development.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the update and the Chairman thanked all members of the Task and Finish Group.

9. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Democratic Services Team Leader presented the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's work programme.

The following items would be added to the work programme for future meetings:

- The Contact Centre would be added to the January 2015 meeting.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy would be added to the February 2015 meeting.

10. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Lynda Harford updated members on the Leaders Portfolio Holder meeting, which had apportioned Community Chest funding. Councillor Harford commended the Leader for the openness with which the Community Chest funding was apportioned. The Committee was informed that since the funding had been increased to £1500, the rate of applications had increased.

Councillor Jose Hales requested that a small part of the unexpected windfall from solar

farm applications be used to top up the Community Chest funding for this year and also be used to top up next year's funding. Councillor Philippa Hart supported this. The Deputy Leader of the Council informed Members that this was being considered.

As the Community Chest was so over-subscribed, it was suggested that consideration be given to limiting the number of funding applications that could be submitted by each village.

11. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates of future meetings were noted. The next meeting would take place on Thursday 8 January 2015 at 6pm. It was noted that the February meeting date was Tuesday 10 February 2015.

The Meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.

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