

**POLICY SCRUTINY GROUP
9TH APRIL 2019**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)
 The Vice-chair (Councillor K. Harris)
 Councillors Brookes, Hamilton, Murphy and Snartt

Councillor Rollings (Deputy Lead Member for
Customer Services)

Head of Customer Experience
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (MH)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Paling, Parton, Shepherd and Smith

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

39. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

40. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures of interests were made.

41. DECLARATION OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

42. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

43. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

The Head of Customer Experience gave a presentation setting out progress with delivering the Customer Service Strategy (item 6 on the agenda supplement filed with these minutes).

The Deputy Lead Member for Customer Services and the Head of Customer Experience assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) Customers were considered to include anyone who interacted with the Council but the focus was on residents and businesses. Parish/town councils and local groups or associations were considered to be stakeholders.
- (ii) The potential isolation of rural customers had not been identified as an issue that needed addressing. The Council made use of customer segmentation data and that was used to identify potential barriers to access when services were redesigned.
- (iii) The customer service access point provided by the Council in Syston was not heavily used and information regarding the service could be provided to councillors to assist with its promotion.
- (iv) Services were being optimised for online transactions but access was still being provided through telephone and face-to-face channels.
- (v) In response to individual experiences described by members of the Group, it was stated that if councillors' concerns about customer service were raised with the Head of Service they could be addressed.
- (vi) Satisfaction levels of customers using the Customer Service Centre and the Contact Centre were measured through asking customers to complete a short survey, and were high when compared with other councils. Information regarding the proportion of customers who completed the survey could be provided to members of the Group.
- (vii) For the Contact Centre, customer satisfaction was prioritised over waiting times but waiting times and dropout rates were monitored.
- (viii) The Head of Customer Experience did not take the lead on the Council's Customer Service Excellence accreditation but expressed her view that it was a worthwhile exercise. The reasons for this were that it recognised achievement, had a reputational benefit with customers and stakeholders and maintained a focus on customer service because the accreditation was reviewed annually and required continuous improvements to be made. The Deputy Lead Member for Customer Services stated that it was an award that the Council wished to keep.
- (ix) Managers were responsible for delivering the actions in the Customer Service Strategy as well as others set out in the Corporate Plan and Team Plans. Progress was monitored at one-to-one meetings with those managers.

The following comments were made by members of the Group:

- (i) The introduction of a webchat facility to assist customers using the Council's website and systems enabling customers to track progress with issues that they had raised were to be welcomed.
- (ii) Some of the messages that were played while customers waited for their calls to the Contact Centre to be answered could be unnecessary or repetitive.

RESOLVED

1. that the information be noted;

2. that information regarding the customer service access point provided by the Council in Syston and the proportion of customers who completed satisfaction surveys after using the Customer Service Centre and the Contact Centre be provided to members of the Group.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To provide the Group with further information regarding the matter.

44. ICT STRATEGY

The Head of Customer Experience gave a presentation setting out progress with delivering the ICT Strategy (item 7 on the agenda supplement filed with these minutes).

The Head of Customer Experience assisted with consideration of the item and provided the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The current strategy was written with an internal audience in mind. A summary for the public could be provided if that was something that was required.
- (ii) It was acknowledged that the Council's use of a withheld number for outgoing telephone calls could be inconvenient for some customers. It was unclear what the reasons for using a withheld number were and the matter could be looked at to determine whether it was necessary.
- (iii) The use of Cloud-based data storage would consume less energy than using servers at the Council's offices because Cloud-based systems had more efficient cooling systems.
- (iv) The results of the health check of the Council's IT systems were reported to the Audit Committee.
- (v) Data breaches had occurred at the Council but none of those had been as the result of hacking.
- (vi) The Council had an arrangement with Leicester City Council to provide the Borough Council with an off-site backup facility and therefore greater resilience. Further details of those arrangements could be provided to members of the Group.
- (vii) The Planning Portal was a national system over which the Council had no influence.

The following comments were made by members of the Group:

- (i) Any documents produced by the Council for the public domain should be readable by the public.

RESOLVED

1. that the information be noted;

2. that it be noted that officers would investigate whether the current arrangements for using a withheld number for outgoing calls could be changed;
3. that further information regarding the Council's off-site backup facility, particularly in relation to its independence from the Council's systems, be provided to members of the Group.

Reasons

1. To acknowledge the information received.
2. To acknowledge how issues raised by the Group would be dealt with.
3. To provide the Group with further information regarding the matter.

45. WORK PROGRAMME

The Group was informed that, with the exception of one item, the Group had completed its work programme for the year. The remaining item, scrutiny of the development of the Local Plan, would be taken up by the relevant committee in the new scrutiny structure that would come into operation in the new Council year.

The Chair stated that it was the final meeting of the Group and thanked the members of the Group for their work and making the Group a success.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 24th June 2019 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Policy Scrutiny Group.