

BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2019 at 4.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Bainbridge (Chairman), Councillors Alcroft, Allison, Birks, Brown (a substitute for Councillor McNulty), Mitchelson and Meller (as substitute for Councillor Robson).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Mallinson – Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio
Councillor Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

OFFICERS: Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Customer Services Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

BTSP.73/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor McNulty and Councillor Robson.

BTSP.74/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

BTSP.75/19 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – It was agreed that the items of business in Part A be dealt with in public and Part B be dealt with in private.

BTSP.76/19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – 1) That be noted that Council had, at their meeting on 10 September 2019, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2019. The Chairman signed the minutes.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

BTSP.77/19 CALL – IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

BTSP.78/19 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.23/19 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel.

The report detailed the most recent Notice of Executive Key Decisions, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and had been published online on 13 September 2019.

One key decision fell within the remit of the Panel but had not been included in the Work Programme. A decision on KD.19/19 Borderlands Collaboration Agreement would be taken by the Executive on 14 October 2019.

The Panel discussed the merits of scrutinising the agreement and the Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that the Agreement had been discussed and agreed between the five partners and each partner was in the process of taking the Agreement through their authority's decision making process for approval. The City Council would receive the Agreement for approval on 5 November 2019. The Panel agreed to receive the report when it became public and raise any issues at Council.

Progress on resolutions from previous meetings had been set out at section 3.1 of the report and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a verbal update which had been provided by the Deputy Chief Executive with regard to resolution 2. She stated that the contract for the Sands Centre Redevelopment work was being prepared and would clarify the liability should the site flood during construction. The Deputy Chief Executive would provide a more detailed response to the Panel when the final contract had been completed.

The Panel were disappointed in the length of time that it had taken for the Deputy Chief Executive to provide a response and noted some pending resolutions that had not been completed and had been outstanding for a similar amount of time. The Panel highlighted resolution 3 and asked that a resolution be sought within in two weeks. If no response was received the Chairman would write to GLL to ask for the response.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive took the responsibility to seek a response from GLL within two weeks for the Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that resolutions 7, 8, 9 and 10 had all been completed and circulated to Members of the Panel.

The Panel noted that some of the written responses had been received only minutes before the Panel meeting which had not been acceptable to them. They asked that any resolutions that were completed on the day of the Panel be circulated to Member in hard copy at the meeting.

A Member asked why resolution 1 had been delayed until March 2020 and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that initially it had been suggested that a separate report on the Sands Centre Project Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be prepared for the Panel but following further investigation it was felt that it would be more appropriate to submit the KPIs as part of the Corporate Projects Board which was due to be scrutinised by the Panel in March 2020.

With regard to resolution 11 the Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that the Climate Change Working Group had discussed potential KPIs and how the Climate Emergency would be embedded within Council reports. The Corporate Director of Economic Development agreed to look in to the matter further and report back to the Working Group.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel scrutinised the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (OS.23/19);

2) That the Borderlands Collaboration Agreement report be circulated to Panel Members for their information.

3) That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive undertake to receive a written response from GLL within two weeks of this meeting with regard to resolution BTSP.49/19 "That further information on GLL's outreach programme be circulated to Members".

4) That any written responses to the Panel are prepared and circulated at the earliest opportunity, should the response be ready on the day of the next Panel meeting then it must be circulated to the Members in hard copy at the meeting.

BTSP.79/19 CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

The Customer Services Manager submitted an update on the ongoing work within Customer Services including current performance, upcoming improvements and ongoing actions (CE.05/19).

The Customer Services Manager reported that, following consultation, staff working hours within the Customer Services Team had altered to align with customer demand. In addition, the number of front line advisors had increased by 1.5 full time equivalent to cover busy periods. Consultation on the proposed 8am opening time for telephone calls had been successful, the date to go live with the 8am calls had been delayed until April 2020 due to staff movement and the time required to undertake training.

The Customer Services Manager explained that a new Performance Management Strategy had gone live on 1 October 2019 which included the discussion of individual performance against the Service's targets. The meetings had proved successful and identified training needs and focussed on the individual's wellbeing.

The Scrutiny Panel had previously discussed the proposed changes to Customer Services and had asked about the use of the qmatic queue management system in the ground floor refurbishment. The Customer Services Manager reported that the qmatic system had been purchased and would be live from 14 November 2019.

The Customer Services Manager stated that the review of the Customer Services Business Continuity Plan was underway and he detailed some of the online tools which Customer Services were using which would improve business continuity moving forward. He added that a new contact centre telephone system was being investigated as part of the Civic Centre telephone upgrade.

In considering the update Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Would the new telephone system provide additional functions for Customer Services?

In response the Customer Services Manager explained that the existing telephone system was in working order but had limited functions. The new system would be web based which allowed the Customer Services Team to log in and answer calls from any location, this would give better business continuity during times of emergency. In addition, the new system would allow the system to be changed quickly so messages at key times could be altered therefore improving the customer experience.

Having a web based system also allowed greater flexibility within the team and could support home working and therefore attract more talent into the authority.

In response to a further question the Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that the proposed telephone system was part of a Council wide upgrade to a modern and flexible system and was included in the IT capital programme.

- Referring to section 1.4 of the report, Members asked if there was a high sickness absence rate and staff turnover within the Customer Services Team.

The Customer Services Manager reported that there was a low staff turnover within the team and the sickness absence rate was below average, he commented that this was a result of the proactive performance management strategy that was in place which better supported each individual.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder reminded the Panel of an incident which had occurred in the Customer Contact Centre and informed the Panel that she had met with staff and officers to check on staff wellbeing following the incident. She had confidence in the changes that had been introduced in the Customer Contact Centre and she applauded the response of staff and officers in dealing with the situation.

- How were the one to one meetings undertaken in a way which enabled staff to feel supported to do a good job and meet targets but not feel micro managed?

The Customer Services Manager acknowledged that it was difficult to achieve, the performance management of the team reflected on the whole authority, but the wellbeing of the team was also vital. The one to one meetings allowed performance to be discussed and issues to be dealt with but it also allowed each individual to discuss their own wellbeing in confidential surroundings and allowed managers to address issues and support the individuals to achieve the aims of the team.

- In reference to the incident in the Customer Contact Centre a Member asked if all of the emergency alarms were working.

The Customer Services Manager confirmed that all of the emergency alarms were working and were tested on a weekly basis. There had been an issue regarding the speed of the response during the incident, but this had since been rectified.

- There was some concern that the introduction of 8am opening for calls had been delayed by eight months due to the addition of two new advisors, with 22 team members this seemed to be an excessive delay.

The Customer Services Manager reminded the Panel that the 8am opening had been part of a wider restructure in Customer Services. The introduction of 8am opening was a significant change to Customer Services and to the Council and, to be successful, all staff had to be fully trained in a wide variety of services to be able to answer customers questions. He did not want to start the 8am calls until he was satisfied everyone was fully trained.

The Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder concurred that it was important that all staff were fully trained to answer a range of questions and provide the best customer experience possible.

- Did the call wait time include the option to call forward?

The Customer Services Manager clarified that calls to the main Council number were answered as soon as they were connected, callers were then given a range of options. The call wait time began when an option had been selected. Abandoned calls to the Council was currently 18%, the target was to reduce this to between 8 and 12% with aspirations to consistently achieve 8%.

- Customer Services responded to emails within 48 hours, how many of the responses were actual responses to the email and how many were holding emails while another section responded to them.

The Customer Services Manager responded that every email through the Customer Services Team received a positive action and no holding emails were sent. When an email was sent to

Customer Services in entered an automated system which was integrated into the CRM system and it sent out an automatic reply which contained a specific reference number. Customer Services would either provide the response required to the email, ask for further information or send it to the relevant department for processing.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive stated that it was an aspirational strategy for Customer Services to be the nerve centre of the Council where all key services and tasks were co-ordinated and deployed from.

- Would the new telephony system connect to the CRM system and to other departments?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive acknowledged that there were gaps in the system that would be improved by the roll out of Salesforce. Salesforce would create an integrated system across the whole organisation. Old systems would be replaced to deliver services in a more efficient way and new systems would help direct resources in the right place. The upgrade had been included in the Digital IT Strategy and the Customer Services Strategy. Work was being undertaken to reorganise and resource the IT section and more information would be presented to the Panel at a future meeting.

- What support did Customer Services provide on behalf of Riverside?

The Customer Services Manager reported that Customer services provided a telephone line to Riverside Customer Services and provided only basic support to those who needed help to use the service.

RESOLVED – That the Customer Services Update (CE.05/19) be welcomed;

2) That the Panel supports the following:

- The Contact Centre to open at 8am (calls only) upon completion of training
- Updated phone system as part of the wider telephony upgrade
- Transferring operational documents to cloud storage
- Implementation of more structure individual performance measures

(The meeting ended at 4.58pm)