

## **ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2018**

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## **ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2018**

#### **Present:**

Councillor D Skinner ..... Chair  
Councillor T Mansbridge ..... Vice-Chair  
Councillor J Barry ..... Councillor B Wright  
“ B Ridgway

#### **Also Present**

Sarah Sternberg – Monitoring Officer (for Min No 92)  
Ann Bedford – Customer Standards & Complaints Officer, Bolsover DC (for Min No 92)  
Sara Gordon – HR and OD Manager (for Min No 93)  
Sue Veerman – Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Alan Maher – Governance Officer

#### **86 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Dale, L Robinson and R Welton.

#### **87 Declarations of Interest**

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

No interests were declared at this meeting.

#### **88 Minutes of Last Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee held on 18 April 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **89 Remit of the Committee**

Members were reminded of the role played by the Council's Scrutiny Committees under the Council's Constitution. In particular, they were advised of the range of specific powers and responsibilities which they could exercise; and especially their right to scrutinize executive decisions and to review the operation of policies and services.

Members then considered the Terms of Reference of the Committee. They noted its responsibilities for scrutinizing the operation of internal facing Council services and policies, including those services provided as part of the Strategic Partnership with Bolsover as well as the decommissioning of services, self regulation, the Transformation Programme and employees.

**RESOLVED** – That the Organisation Scrutiny Committee notes the remit of the Committee.

**90      Selection of Scrutiny Review Topic**

The Committee was asked to consider the possible topics which had been suggested for its next Scrutiny review. Members discussed the potential benefits and drawbacks of carrying out a review into each of these topics, before reaching a decision on which one to choose.

There was a consensus that a review should take place into how the Council communicates – especially the way in which it communicates with local communities, through the website and the Council's Newspaper, and the press and media. The use which is made of advertising as a way to inform and promote the reputation of the Council and the District was also raised.

The Committee made it clear that good communications should be at the heart of everything which the Council does. However, Members were concerned that this does not always happen. They highlighted some of the apparent examples of ineffective communication that they were aware of. Similarly, they were also concerned that the Council may not be making effective use of advertising to promote itself and its services. Again, some apparent examples of this were highlighted.

The Committee was then informed that a Scrutiny Review would take place at Bolsover District Council into the operation of the Joint Environmental Health Service. The Committee welcomed this. Members felt that it would be appropriate for the Committee to also participate in this review as it was into a Joint Service which, serves the North East Derbyshire district.

**RESOLVED** –

- (1) That the Council's approach to Communications and advertising be reviewed by the Organisation Scrutiny Committee;
- (2) That Bolsover District Council be requested to allow a Member or Members of the North East Derbyshire District Council Organisation Scrutiny Committee to participate in the Review of the Joint Environmental Health Service.

(Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

**91 Draft Work Programme**

The Committee was asked to consider its proposed Work Programme for the 2018-2019 Local Government Year. Members discussed the proposed work programme and noted how the Committee could pro-actively identify and consider issues, such as different aspects of the Council's Employment Policies and how these are applied.

The Committee was reminded that it could also look at relevant Council services, the joint services as provided as part of the Strategic Partnership with Bolsover District Council and those services provided on behalf of the Council by other organisations, such as Rykneld Homes.

**RESOLVED** – That the Committee endorses the proposed Work Programme for the 2018/19 Local Government Year.

**92 Review of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy**

The report to Committee explained that some revisions had been made to the Joint Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy. As part of this, it would now include a formal procedure for dealing with correspondence from Members of Parliament.

The Committee heard from the Monitoring Officer, Sarah Sternberg, who was supported by Ann Bedford, Customer Standards and Complaints Officer for Bolsover District Council. Ms Sternberg explained that during 2016-17 financial year the Council had responded to 74% of all formal complaints (both complex and straight forward) within 10 working days. This was better than the existing target time of responding to straight forward and complicated formal complaints within 15 working days. It was also better than the 20 working days that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman felt was a reasonable timescale for responding to complex matters.

The report made it clear that no changes to the target response times set by the Policy were proposed at the moment. Instead, it was recommended that performance continued to be monitored in order to determine whether a ten day working day response time for straight forward complaints would be practicable. In any event, the 15 working day response time for complicated matters would, it was stated, be retained.

The Committee discussed the report with the Monitoring Officer. Members noted that performance against the existing target time was currently high. They raised concerns that if the new target times were not consistently met, then it might appear that performance had fallen when in reality it had not. Although it was recognised that other revisions to the policy such as the introduction of a formal procedure for dealing with MP correspondence, needs to be progressed, the Committee felt that it would not be appropriate to endorse the report recommended to Cabinet for approval.

**RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the Committee does not endorse the recommendation in the report for officers to continue to monitor the timescale for straight forward complaints to see if this could be reduced from 15 working days to 10 working days.
- (2) That the Committee does not endorse the recommendation in the report that it refers the revised Joint Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy to the Council's Cabinet for adoption.

(Monitoring Officer)

**93     Annual Report of Human Resources and Organisational Development**

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Human Resources and Organisational Development Service for 2017-18. The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager, Sara Gordon, assisted the Committee by highlighting a range of performance information contained in the report.

In this context, she explained that the Council had placed 66 adverts for job vacancies and that, linked to this, work had taken place to better market and promote the Council as a good employer in order to attract candidates. This work included holding career-days, increased use of social media and adopting better branding.

Members also heard that sickness levels had been higher than the target figure. An average of 10.55 days were lost for each employee compared to the target of 8.5 days per employee. Ms Gordon explained that stress and mental health issues continued to be a leading cause for ill health absences. A range of measures had been taken in an attempt to improve occupational health and the wellbeing of staff. As a further improvement, a new occupational health provider would be employed by the Council from August 2018.

The Committee thanked Ms Gordon for her presentation and discussed the report with her. During this discussion Members learned that the number of short term absences had fallen but the number of long term cases of ill health absences had remained practically unchanged. The Committee discussed how staff on long term sickness absences could be brought back into work.

Members were pleased to hear that the Council tries to help those who have been absent on ill health grounds to return. This included allowing employees to return to work on a phased return basis.

Members felt it important that those who leave the Council's employment should be asked for their views about why they left. Ms Gordon explained that those leaving the Council were asked to complete exit questionnaires, but that few of these were completed. There was an extensive discussion of the reasons for this and the opportunities that are also available for people to

express their views on why they wanted to leave the Council, both through their line managers and directly through Human Resources if they prefer.

The Committee made it clear that it would like to receive further statistical analysis on the reasons given by former employees for leaving the Council. Ms Gordon agreed to provide this information.

**RESOLVED** – That the Committee noted the report.

**94     List of Key Decisions – Issue No 74**

The Committee considered Issue No 74 of the List of Key Decisions which set out the major decisions being taken over the next few months.

No forthcoming issues were identified for Scrutiny to look at.

**95     Additional Urgent Items**

There were no items to be discussed.

**96     Date of Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee is on Wednesday 5 September 2018 at 3.00 pm in Chamber 1, District Council Offices.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

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