

ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

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Present:

Councillor D Skinner Chair
Councillor T Mansbridge Vice-Chair
Councillor B Lewis Councillor L Robinson
“ B Ridgway “ B Wright

Also Present

Scott Chambers – Communications and Marketing Manager (for Min No 212)
Sara Gordon – Human Resources and Organisation Development Manager
(for Min Nos 213 & 214)
Rachael Pope – Customer Services and Operational Manager (for Min No 215)
Sue Veerman – Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Alan Maher – Governance and Civic Officer

209 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors J Barry, A Dale and R Welton.

210 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.

211 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee held on 4 July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

212 Scrutiny Review

Members were reminded that the Committee had agreed at its last meeting to review how the Council communicates, both internally and with the wider public. As part of this, it also wanted to look at whether effective use was made of paid advertising, to both inform and promote the reputation of the Council and the District as a whole.

In order to help the Committee develop further the scope of this review, they were assisted by the Communications and Marketing Manager, who explained the role played by the Communications and Marketing service within the Council. In particular he made it clear that the service had a wide remit and carried out a significant workload. In this context, Members heard that about 70 news releases were issued annually, that the service dealt with about 150-200 public inquiries and published three editions of '*the News*' magazine, which were sent to all households in the District.

The Communications Manager went on to explain that because of the competing demands, the service had only limited capacity to deal directly with Print Media and other journalists. He explained that the changing nature of the newspaper industry meant that there was now often a more rapid turnover of journalists than happened in the past, which can make it difficult to build up relationships with journalists and for them to develop an understanding of ongoing issues. Members noted this. Some questioned whether these staffing changes applied to all of the print media locally and gave some examples of long standing journalists, who continued to remain in post.

The Communications Manager then explained how the Council used social media. The Communications and Marketing Service, it was explained, currently managed eight social media accounts, including the Council's Facebook account. The meeting discussed the value of different forms of social media. Although concern was expressed about social media sites, such as Facebook, and how they can be used for misinformation or aggressive comments, Members also felt that Facebook and other social media sites could offer highly effective ways of getting across information and engaging with local people.

The Committee discussed these and other points raised with the Communications and Marketing Manager. As part of this discussion, Members made it clear that they would like to explore further how the resource constraints facing the service could be addressed. They also discussed some of the improvements that the service hoped to make. In particular, the launch of the new Intranet Site, how they hoped to use '*the News*' to better explain to the public the problems and financial challenges facing the Council and improving the website so that it is easier to access through mobile phones and other hand held electronic devices. There was also a discussion about how the service could become aware of potential policy and operational changes in advance, so that it can communicate them appropriately.

The Committee thanked the Communications and Marketing Manager for his contribution to the discussion. He left the meeting at this point.

The Committee then considered an agreed timetable for the Communications and Marketing review along with the witnesses who would be asked to take part in it. In this context, the Committee asked to consider a change to the running order of the witnesses, the Committee agreed this. Members also made it clear that they would like to arrange a visit to Tupton School in order

to hear from its media group, rather than ask the young people to take time out of their school day to attend the Council offices.

The Committee then discussed the suggested questions that witnesses would be asked to focus on. During the discussion some concern was raised about whether the proposed questions might concentrate too much on collating information rather than seeking the views of witnesses about how the Council's approaches communications and advertising and the ways in which they might do it better. It was explained that these questions were intended to provide the basis for further discussion and that Members were encouraged to send any other possible questions to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager in the first instance, so that a final list of questions for the review can be drawn up. The Committee supported this approach.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Communications and Marketing Manager be thanked for his contribution to the discussion.
- (2) That the proposed Action Plan for the review be progressed along the lines set out in the report subject to the amendments to the running order for witnesses agreed at today's meeting and any final amendments determined by the Chair.
- (3) That Members send any additional possible questions for the review to the Scrutiny Manager so that a definitive programme of questions can be drawn up.

(Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

213 Action Plan – Health, Wellbeing and Morale

With the agreement of the Chair, the Committee then received an update on the progress which had been made against the Action Plan 'targets' set by Cabinet in response to the Committee's findings and recommendations, which it had made following its review of Health & Wellbeing and Morale. Members were assisted by the Human Resources and Organisation Development Manager, who highlighted a range of specific improvements that had now been made. In this context, she pointed out that a new Health and Wellbeing Framework was now in place, a 'Work Well' Group had been established and that 'Manager Toolkits' had been placed on the Council's internal computer 'S' drive network. Members heard that these toolkits would shortly be transferred across to the Council new Intranet, which is due to launch imminently. The new intranet site should make it a lot easier for staff to access the human resources systems that they require. The Committee welcomed this.

In addition, the Human Resources and Organisation Development Manager pointed out that the Council's externally provided Occupational Health Service is now in place. The new service, it was explained, had already proved itself to be successful and was delivering a more consistent approach

in terms of staff assessments so that they can be helped back into work. Reports of these interviews, she stated, were also being produced more quickly and the interviews themselves were being carried out in a more flexible way. When appropriate, telephone interviews now took place. Members supported this.

The Committee discussed with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager the progress that had been made. Members made it clear that they were pleased at what had been achieved and the progress that had been made. At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee thanked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager for her comments and her participation in the discussion.

RESOLVED – That the Committee’s review on Health & Wellbeing and Morale be signed off.

214 Action Plan – Job Evaluation and Associated Benefits

The Committee then considered the Action Plan agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 1 August 2018. This set out the specific measures that would be taken in response to the findings and recommendations which the Committee had made following on from its review of job evaluation and association benefits.

The Committee was again assisted by the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager, in particular, she informed Members that a strategic group had been formed, which was expected to play a big role in developing specific initiatives to promote the Council’s organisation and workforce development. Relevant key officers, she stated, would discuss ideas at this Group, feedback any proposals and then action them as appropriate. The Group could also report directly to the Senior Management Team.

The Committee discussed the Action Plan. There was satisfaction with the progress that had been made on addressing the Committee’s findings. As part of the discussion, Members welcomed the work taking place to improve the Employee Survey. Members noted that this had been delayed so that a more ‘interactive’ approach could be developed, in order to capture better the views of staff. The Committee felt that the survey, which is now due to take place next year, would play a key role in terms of securing future progress both in terms of providing staff welfare and promoting employee retention.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Committee thanked the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager for her comments and participation in the discussion.
- (2) That the Lead Officer’s response to the review of job evaluation and associated benefits be accepted.

215 Customer Services Performance Report 2017/18

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor D Skinner left the meeting at this point. The Vice-Chair of the Committee, Councillor T Mansbridge then took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Committee considered the report prepared for Cabinet on the performance of the Council's Contact Centres during the 2017/18 financial year. The report had been considered by Cabinet at its August 2018 meeting. The Committee was assisted in this by the Council's Customer Services Operational Manager. In particular, she told Members that the Call Centre staff had answered 95% of calls within 22 seconds and that only 2.7% of calls had been abandoned. Moreover, all personal visitors to the Customer Services centre at Mill Lane were seen within the 20 minute corporate standard that had been set.

The Committee discussed the report and welcomed the high levels of performance achieved by the Contact Centre. In particular, Members discussed the successful take up of webchat as a way for customers to access information from the Council about its services and resolve any problems. The Committee also discussed the complaints process. Members noted that the vast majority of complaints were responded to within the Council's Customer Service Standard of 15 working days. Members were pleased to hear that 98% of formal investigation complaints were responded to within the 15 working day target and 88% of internal review complaints were answered within that timescale.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Corporate Operational Manager be thanked for her presentation and her contribution to the discussion.
- (2) That the report setting out contact centre performance 2017/18 financial year be noted.

216 List of Key Decisions – Issue No 76

A Member queried the latest position on the proposed report about an empty property trial. It was agreed that the Housing Strategy and Growth Manager, Karl Apps, be asked to contact the Member directly about this.

(Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

217 Work Programme

The Committee noted its draft Work Programme for the year and the specific amendment agreed at today's meeting, to arrange a meeting for the Committee to take evidence at Tupton School as part of the Communications and Advertising Review.

218 Additional Urgent Items

There were no additional urgent items for discussion at this meeting.

219 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee is 7 November 2018.

The meeting finished at 4.30 pm

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