

**ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2018**

**I N D E X**

<b>Page No</b>	<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Heading</b>
1	344	Apologies for Absence
1	345	Declarations of Interest
1	346	Minutes of Last Meeting
1	347	Scrutiny Review - interviews
8	348	List of Key Decisions – Issue No 79
8	349	Work Programme
8	350	Additional Urgent Items
9	351	Date of Next Meeting

## **ORGANISATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2018**

#### **Present:**

Councillor D Skinner ..... Chair  
Councillor T Mansbridge ..... Vice-Chair  
Councillor J Barry ..... Councillor L Robinson  
“ A Dale “ B Wright  
“ B Ridgway

#### **Also Present**

Clare Jarrald – Marketing and Design Manager (for Min No 347)  
David Vickers – Digital Media officer (for Min No 347)  
Jill Ward – Communications Manager, Rykneld Homes (for Min No 347)  
Sue Veerman – Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Alan Maher – Governance and Civic Officer

#### **344 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Welton.

#### **345 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.

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted at the meeting.

#### **346 Minutes of Last Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record. The Chair highlighted the apolitical approach taken by the Committee to its work. He asked that as many Members as possible attend the Committee’s meetings in order to help re-inforce this consensual approach and ensure that it continues in the future.

#### **347 Scrutiny Review**

*Councillor A Dale entered the meeting at this point.*

Members were reminded that the Committee was carrying out a review of how the Council communicates, both within the organisation and also with the wider public. The Committee wanted to find out if effective use was being made of paid advertising, to both inform and promote the reputation of the Council and the District as a whole.

The Committee had received a 'scene setting' presentation from the Communications and Marketing Manager at its previous meeting. Members discussed this presentation with him and also his views on the challenges facing his service.

The Committee now heard from the Council's Marketing and Design Manager, the Digital Media Officer and the Rykneld Homes Communications Manager. Each of these officers were asked to address a series of questions.

Marketing and Design Manager

Q1 What is your role in this area and how does it contribute to effective communications

The Marketing and Design Manager began by explaining that she is a joint officer, serving both NEDDC and BDC. She manages printing and design staff based in both Authorities, who produce high quality work. Members were informed that her management and service delivery responsibilities took a large part of her time, and as a consequence, she had only very limited capacity to carry out her marketing role. Extra capacity would enable her to do more on this.

Q2 What methods do we use to communicate and which are the most effective

The officer highlighted a range of communication techniques which were now used, including the Council's website as well as its social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Use of social media as a communication technique had grown in recent years, but there was scope for it to grow considerably further.

Q3 How do we ensure the information provided is accessible, up to date, accurate on our various methods both internally and externally

The officer explained the key role of the Communications Team in keeping up to date the information on the Council's website and on its various social media platforms.

Q4 How effective do you think our communication to internal employees is

The Marketing and Design Manager felt that the Council communicates well with its employees. In particular, the new Corporate Extranet had proved to be a valuable platform for sharing information within the organisation. She made a plea for a more strategic approach and especially for other service areas to keep the Communications Team informed of their activities or special initiatives, well in advance, so that campaigns could be planned and initiatives publicised effectively.

The Marketing and Design Manager felt that there might be value if a communications officer was once again present at Strategic Alliance Management Team (SAMT) meetings. This would ensure that the Communications Team had advance notice of forthcoming issues that would require an effective communication strategy to be developed. It would also enable SAMT to share information with other parts of the Council more effectively.

Q5 How do we measure performance

The Officer was not aware of a specific performance monitoring framework for her areas of activity. The main performance measures that she looked to were around customer satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of the service.

Q6 How do we identify and understand what customers want from us

The officer referred to the customer satisfaction survey, which is issued periodically. Feedback from customers was also gained by monitoring 'posts' on Facebook and other forms of social media. The service tries to liaise extensively with services to understand the issues that they need to publicise and to communicate.

Q7 What steps do we take to ensure people whose first language is not English and people with disabilities can access our communications

The officer made clear that the Communications Team had an important role to play in ensuring that appropriate levels of accessibility for all to Council information were maintained. The officer highlighted how language preferences on the Council's website could be changed and how the option to translate documents into languages other than English was offered. She also explained the ways in which people with sensory disabilities could access information.

Q8 Do we share any work in this area with partners

The officer explained that the Council does print and design work for Bolsover District Council. She pointed out that Rykneld Homes does not use the service as much as it used to, but now contracts with a wider range of graphic designers. The Rykneld Homes magazine 'Your Rykneld' she explained was produced externally.

Q9 Have you any suggestions for how the service could be improvement

The officer reiterated her concerns about capacity. She felt that additional resources were required, but again made the point that more could be done with existing resources if projects were planned well in advance.

Q10 Is there anything else you would like to tell us

No other points were raised by the officer at this time.

The Committee thanked the Marketing and Design Manager for her contribution to the discussion.

*The officer then left the meeting.*

Digital Media Officer

Q1 What is your role in this area and how does it contribute to effective communications

The officer explained that his was a joint post, serving both NEDDC and BDC. His role involved managing their websites, the extranet and their social media presence.

Q2 What methods do we use to communicate and which are the most effective

The officer explained the wide range of communication techniques used by the Council. These included the 'The News' which is circulated to all households in the District and the website, which now receives about 500,000 hits or visits, per annum.

The Committee noted the result of the latest Citizens' Panel survey (published in June 2017). This made clear that many of the respondents had experienced significant problems when trying to navigate around the Council's website.

The officer made clear that further work was required in order to make the website accessible for hand held mobile devices. He pointed out however, that this would place large demands on the already limited time and staff resources which were available.

The officer stated that the Council had a very strong social media presence. Messages placed by the Council on Twitter were often shared, or 'retweeted' by those who received them. As a consequence, they can end up being seen by many thousands of people.

Q3 How do we ensure the information provided is accessible, up to date, accurate on our various methods both internally and externally

The officer explained his role in working with the services in order to make sure that documents and other information on the website were kept up to date and how he managed the information on the various social media platforms.

Q4 How effective do you think our communication to internal employees is

The officer made it clear that he felt considerable progress had been made in improving internal communications as a result of the introduction of the new 'Extranet'. He highlighted the information/advice which staff were now able to share on the new site. The information was also being posted on the 'Extranet' a lot quicker than it was on the old 'Nedi' site.

Q5 How do we measure performance

The officer explained how information accessed using the website was monitored using analytical software. This helps the service to understand how many times the site had been visited and crucially what information people had asked for, so that this could be shaped to meet their needs.

Q6 How do we identify and understand what customers want from us

The Digital Media Officer explained the ways of measuring customer needs. He reiterated the information that could be gained by analysing the Council's website, to see what they felt was valuable. He also emphasised just how important it was in terms of internal customers for Communications to receive advance notice of future initiatives, so that they could help them plan appropriate web, social media and other media coverage.

The officer referred to the Communications, Marketing and Design Team internal satisfaction survey, published in November 2016. A copy of the survey was appended to the Agenda and considered by Members. This indicated high levels of customer satisfaction with how the Council communicates, which the Committee noted.

Q7 What steps do we take to ensure people whose first language is not English and people with disabilities can access our communications

The officer highlighted the options on the website for people to view content in other languages and the arrangements which were in place for providing translated versions of reports and other documents to those who do not speak English as their first language. He also informed Members about how people with sensory disabilities can access information, for instance by changing colours on the screen to make it easier to see text or by enabling them to increase the size of the font.

Q8 Do we share any work in this area with partners

The officer explained that the service works in partnership with Bolsover District Council, parish councils, local businesses, Rykneld Homes and Leisure Centres – both on campaigns and by sharing each other's information through their social media platforms.

Q9 Have you any suggestions for how the service could be improvement

The Digital Media Officer highlighted the lack of capacity across the Communications Team as a whole. He explained that there was no cover for his post and that as a consequence he has to make practically all of the changes required to the Council's web content and social media platforms.

Extra resources would increase capacity and would enable him to adopt a more strategic approach and develop the Council's digital 'offer', rather than spend so much time carrying out this update work.

Q10 Is there anything else you would like to tell us

No additional points were raised by the officer at this time.

Members then thanked the Digital Media Officer for this contribution to the discussion.

*The officer then left the meeting.*

Communications Manager – Rykneld Homes

Q1 What is your role in this area and how does it contribute to effective communications

The officer explained that she is Communications Manager at Rykneld Homes and was responsible for a small, multi-functional, team. Each team member has been assigned an area of the business to specialise in but they all could cover each others role. This enables them to build up their understanding of what the business does, what it is trying to achieve and what pressures are facing it.

Q2 What methods do we use to communicate and which are the most effective

The officer went through the communications methods used by Rykneld Homes, including website and social media platforms – especially Facebook and Twitter. Members were informed that the Company's website had become increasingly important as a means of communication and as a means to access information. The number of hits on the website had grown over the last ten years and the site was likely to become an increasingly important communication tool in the future.

The officer made special mention of the 'Your Rykneld' magazine, which was sent to all tenants. This magazine, she stated, was very popular and provided a real connection between the tenants and the company. Members noted the high readership of the magazine. The Committee asked about the Company's use of the Council's printing and graphic design functions. In this context, Members learned that the Company now puts its design and printwork out to tender. This was partly a consequence of the fact that the

Council can no longer do largescale print runs, required to produce the 'Your Rykneld' magazine. She also stated that the Council no longer had sufficient design capacity to carry out work in the flexible ways and to the tight timescales which are required.

Q3 How do we ensure the information provided is accessible, up to date, accurate on our various methods both internally and externally

The officer explained that one of her team's role was to make sure that the website was kept up to date and that Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms were closely monitored.

Q4 How effective do you think our communication to internal employees is

She felt that Rykneld Homes communicated well with its employees. In this context, the officer highlighted the staff magazine and how employees are involved in deciding what should be included in it. The magazine content is staff led but still contains of corporate information.

Q5 How do we measure performance

The officer explained how they sought to get feedback from users, especially through the Tenant Survey. The Rykneld Homes Communications Team also works with other parts of the organisation to see what feedback they have received from customers and their perceptions of how well they were being kept informed.

Q6 How do we identify and understand what customers want from us

The officer highlighted the extent of customer consultation which Rykneld Homes carries out, including the Tenants Surveys. She also highlighted the use of analytical software to gauge what information people look at on the website. Feedback from customers posted on social media could also provide useful information about the types of information that customers required.

Q7 What steps do we take to ensure people whose first language is not English and people with disabilities can access our communications

The Communications Manager pointed out that the company used the same translation service as the Council. The website could be translated into different languages and that documents could be translated on request. She also highlighted the 'Braille Aloud' facility to read out content etc. Finally, legal documents always make it clear that they could be translated into other languages.

Q8 Do we share any work in this area with partners

The officer explained that the company works with other partners and especially with the Council. In this context she referred to a press release



that had recently been published about a regeneration project that had been sent out in conjunction with the Council. She also referred to co-operation with the Police and County Council plus how the Council and Rykneld Homes 're-tweet' each others Twitter content.

Q9 Have you any suggestions for how the service could be improvement

The officer promised to reflect on this and to make any suggestions in writing to the Overview and Scrutiny Manager when she had time to consider any improvements. She did not feel that she could comment on the Council's own communications service as she did not have sufficient information about it.

Q10 Is there anything else you would like to tell us

The Communications Manager emphasised the good working relationship with the Council which Rykneld Homes hoped would continue.

The Communications Manager was thanked by the Committee for her contribution to the review.

*She then left the meeting.*

Members discussed briefly the evidence which they had received. They noted that a lot of concern had been raised about the capacity of the service to meet the demands placed on it and also the need for the Council as a whole to treat communications in a strategic way. Specific mention had been made of the high levels of readership of the Council's and Rykneld Homes' magazines. Members felt that it would be helpful to explore the scope for potentially raising further advertising income from both publications as part of the review.

Finally, the Committee also noted the potential for improving internal communication within the Council and in particular the suggestion that a Communications Officer might attend future SAMT meetings. Again, Members made it clear that they would like to explore this as part of the review.

### **348 List of Key Decisions – Issue No 79**

The Committee considered Issue No 79 of the List of Key Decisions which set out the major decisions being taken over the next few months.

### **349 Work Programme**

The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Organisation Scrutiny Committee 2018/19 for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

**RESOLVED** – That the Committee noted its Work Programme for 2018/19 Municipal Year.

**350 Additional Urgent Items**

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

**351 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next scheduled meeting of the Organisation Scrutiny Committee was 16 January 2019.

---