

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 2020

Present: Councillor R Boam (Chairman)

Councillors J Hoult, E G C Allman, A J Bridgen, V Richichi, S Sheahan, M B Wyatt and D Bigby (Substitute for Councillor R Johnson)

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R Ashman and R D Bayliss

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mrs M Long, Mr T Shardlow, K Spiers and Mrs R Wallace

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Johnson and N Smith.

38. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor S Sheahan declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 – 2019/20 Q3 Performance Report as the report referred to HS2. Councillor S Sheahan would leave the meeting if any discussion took place on the topic.

Councillor M B Wyatt declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 – 2019/20 Q3 Performance report as the report referred to the regeneration of Coalville and he was a local business owner in Coalville Town Centre.

39. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no public questions.

40. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020.

It was moved by Councillor A Bridgen, seconded by Councillor J Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

41. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL UPDATE

The Democratic Services Team Manager presented the report to Members, highlighting the training opportunities currently available and the statistical data around attendance rates during 2019/20.

Councillor S Sheahan was disappointed to see the low level of take up for training. He felt that there was a role for the group whips to encourage attendance at training sessions.

A discussion was had regarding the most appropriate time to hold training sessions, the outcome of which was that the preference was for evening sessions after 5.30pm to enable councillors that worked to attend. It was also felt that availability should be sought before training was scheduled.

Chairman's initials

In response to a question from Councillor D Bigby, the Democratic Services Team Manager confirmed that there was a budget available for member training.

Councillor S Sheahan felt that it was important to engage members when putting together a training session to ensure it was what they wanted at a time that suited. He felt that training sessions should be more enticing and in an enjoyable format. He also suggested that certification be introduced, possibly jointly with other local councils, where credits could be earned.

It was moved by Councillor A Bridgen, seconded by Councillor J Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

42. CUSTOMER SERVICES PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS

A presentation was given by the Head of Customer Services, Corporate Property and Assets updating Members on the performance and progress of the Customer Services Team.

Councillor M B Wyatt questioned whether it was possible to make links with other organisations, particularly the County Council, to allow customers to report issues once to the District Council and then the matter be referred on. In his experience, customers who made contact to report an issue that was not the Council's responsibility was unlikely to make a further call to report it to the correct organisation. The Head of Customer Services, Corporate Property and Assets explained that this was something that had been discussed in the past with his County Council equivalent and he was happy to open discussions again to see what was possible for the future.

At the request of Councillor A Bridgen, the Head of Customer Services, Corporate Property and Assets agreed to provide information on the percentage of customers that currently completed a satisfaction survey once they had made contact with the Council.

In response to a question from Councillor V Richichi, it was confirmed that customer satisfaction was measured and was consistently good. However, it was acknowledged that improvements could be made in the way the data was collected and work was underway to move to digital data collection to encourage an honest response. It was also confirmed that customer satisfaction in relation to housing repairs was measured and issues were followed up by officers.

At the request of Councillor S Sheahan, it was explained how the new telephony system would work and that overall would be more efficient with the ability to measure the quality of service. In addition, it would allow officers to use telephony wherever they were, therefore allowing for a more agile way of working.

In response to a question from Councillor S Sheahan in relation to the plans for the redesign of the buildings reception area, the Head of Customer Services, Corporate Property and Assets reported that the environment for the reception area was not fit for purpose and changes would be considered. He added that the council building was being looked at as a whole as part of the accommodation review and this would be considered by the newly established cross party working group to help give the project some direction.

Councillor E Allman commented on the high number of calls customer services officers were dealing with daily and acknowledged the busier times throughout the year. He

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asked how the service coped at peak times and whether leave was restricted during these times. The Head of Customer Services, Corporate Property and Assets explained that arrangements were in place to stagger the distribution of letters that resulted in more calls, for example, council tax letters to all households. He confirmed that leave was restricted during peak times but there would also be less training so that more officers were able to concentrate on taking calls. He added that agency staff were not usually used, as it did not generally provide the best quality of service.

It was moved by Councillor E Allman, seconded by Councillor V Richichi and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

43. 2019/20 Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The report was presented by Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development.

In response to a question in relation to agency staff from Councillor S Sheahan, it was clarified that agency costs were still within budget but were unfortunately over the target. It was explained that a number of service areas had struggled to recruit to permanent posts, specifically in Housing Maintenance and Refuse. In terms of Housing Maintenance, most of the work had been brought in house and agency staff would only be used in the short term whilst assessments were being undertaken on workloads. Councillor S Sheahan felt that a plan was necessary to reduce the use of agency staff, as it seemed that they were currently employed on a reactive basis. The Strategic Director assured Members that plans were already moving forward.

Councillor D Bigby commented that the time between reporting and the Committee receiving was long, and asked for the timetabling to be reconsidered. In relation to the leisure centre project, he asked if the delay was due to highway issues, which was affecting the work required for the pedestrian bridge. He also suggested that the delay provided a good opportunity to investigate a greener heating system before building works began. The Strategic Director agreed to discuss these matters with the appropriate officers and provide a full response outside of the meeting.

Councillor M B Wyatt expressed his disappointment that work was being undertaken on the new leisure centre site to clear trees when nesting season had begun. He asked if the necessary assessments had been undertaken, and if so, be made available to Members. The Strategic Director believed that assessments would have been undertaken as part of the planning permission stage; he would investigate and provide further information outside of the meeting.

Councillor A Bridgen felt that Coalville would benefit if the town centre boundary was extended to include the surrounding areas. He believed the area would become more inclusive, vibrant and family friendly. The Strategic Director agreed to take the suggestion back to officers.

Following a discussion in relation to the provision of affordable homes, the Strategic Director agreed to obtain further information on the progress towards the target.

Councillor E Allman acknowledged the national skill shortage in relation to the development control service and asked what was being done to attract candidates. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that unfortunately, pay grades at the Council did not follow market trends, but to make positions more competitive with the private sector, there was an option to add market supplements and to

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appoint at higher points on the pay grade. He added that there had been some recent success with recruitment across the authority.

Councillor D Bigby was pleased that establishing a local housing trading company was being investigated but asked that it be brought to scrutiny before being considered by Cabinet. The Strategic Director confirmed that if it moved forward, a report would be submitted for scrutiny.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor J Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) Comments made by the committee be presented to Cabinet when considering the report.

Councillor M B Wyatt left the meeting during the discussion of the item.

Councillor V Richichi left the meeting at the conclusion of the item.

44. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

In response to a question from Councillor D Bigby regarding the Roadmap to Zero Carbon, the Strategic Director confirmed that a more detailed report would be brought back to the relevant scrutiny committee in due course.

Councillor M B Wyatt left the meeting at 7.20pm

Councillor V Richichi left the meeting at 7.25pm

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.46 am