

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely
on Monday 20th March 2017 at 4:30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor David Ambrose Smith
Councillor Peter Cresswell
Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Jo Webber

OTHERS PRESENT

Councillor Mike Rouse
Councillor Dan Schumann
Jo Brooks – Director, Operations
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Safety Manager
Nicole Pema – Human Resources Manager
Rebecca Saunt – Planning Manager
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer
Annette Wade – Customer Services Manager
Dave White – Waste Services Team Leader

90. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

91. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Austen, Mike Bradley and Carol Sennitt.

92. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Anna Bailey, who rented out properties, and Christine Ambrose Smith and David Ambrose Smith declared personal interests in agenda item 9.

93. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

94. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

95. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of items 7 to 8 because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1, 2 and 6 Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as Amended).

96. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS, RESIGNATIONS**

The Committee received an exempt report (R223, previously circulated) which provided details of staff appointments, transfers and resignations between 1st February and 31st March 2017.

The Human Resources Manager advised the Committee that there had been 4 appointments, 8 leavers and 1 transfer during that period. 2 posts had also been deleted. 3 exit interviews had been held and the results were shown under paragraph 3.4 of the report.

It was resolved:

That the contents of the information report be noted.

97. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 6th February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

98. **THE SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015**

The Committee received a report (R224, previously circulated) which sought to ensure the Council could undertake its duty under the Regulations and detailed the Statement of Principles regarding penalty charges.

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that the Regulations had come into effect in October 2015. The objective was to prevent fatalities of private sector tenants from fire by ensuring all landlords' properties installed suitable alarms. To encourage this, the Council had drawn up a Statement of Principles detailing the fines that were proposed if compliance was not forthcoming.

Councillor Peter Cresswell had no hesitation in supporting this and the Committee concurred.

It was resolved:

That the attached Statement of Principles (Appendix 1) be approved and the setting of the proposed penalty charge for first offence at a level of £500 (with a £100 discount for prompt payment within 14 days of service of notice), rising to £1000 for second offences and reaching a maximum of £5000 for third and subsequent offences be agreed.

99. **REVIEW OF TRAVELLERS SITE RENTS**

The Committee received a report (R225, previously circulated) which considered whether a rent increase should be applied to the Earith and Wentworth traveller sites.

The Housing and Community Safety Manager advised the Committee that the sum under paragraph 3.4 of the report should have read £14,652 and not as stated. Rents had been looked at across the region as a benchmarking exercise to bring the rent amounts into line. It was proposed to increase rents from 1st April 2017, though this would not affect the families involved, as the increase would be countered by a benefits increase.

Councillor Peter Cresswell thought the increase was justified and this view was supported by the Committee.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the increase in rent to £85 per week per pitch for Earith and Wentworth traveller sites to be effective from 1st April 2017 be approved;
- (ii) That the Housing & Community Safety Manager carried out a further review of the service charges for both Earith and Wentworth and bring back a report to Committee in May 2017.

100. **CONTRACTOR POLICY AND SMOKING POLICY**

The Committee received a report (R226, previously circulated) which considered introducing a Contractors Policy and revising the Smoking Policy.

The Open Spaces and Facilities Manager advised the Committee that the proposed Contractors Policy would set out the criteria when engaging and monitoring contractors working for the Council. This would include the provision of risk assessments by the contractors and ensuring that they adhered to them.

The Committee were content with the Contractors Policy and approved it.

The Smoking Policy was an updated version following recent law changes and included the provision for non-smoking in cars with under-18 passengers. It also clarified the effect of e-cigarettes.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith queried why the Council's works depot had not been included. It was explained that this was a safety issue, as the employees would otherwise have to leave the premises and stand outside the depot gates next to the road to smoke. Therefore the depot had been given an exemption.

In response to Councillor Julia Huffer's question about where employees at the Council offices went to smoke, it was revealed that they had to leave the premises including the car park, so usually stood in Market Street. Councillor Huffer thought this looked bad, as the employees were easily identifiable. A suitable safe, secure place should be provided for them instead. The Open Space and Facilities Manager stated that somewhere comfortable had not been provided as the Council wished to discourage smoking.

Councillor Peter Cresswell asked how many employees had smoking breaks and what did the Policy allow? The Director, Operations, explained that figures were not available but the Policy stated staff needed their line manager's permission and smoked on their own time. The Council offered a flexitime system, where employees could 'clock in and clock out' as necessary.

Councillor Anna Bailey acknowledged that the Policy was trying to be supportive but there were conflicting opinions amongst the national bodies, such as the National Health Service and Public Health England, on how to deal with the issue. There appeared to be an assumption that e-cigarettes should be treated the same way as normal cigarettes. The Committee needed to know the latest stance by these bodies before deciding on the Council's Policy. So the current situation should be investigated.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith agreed with this view, as there was a variety of views that had to be considered. Therefore it was proposed to defer the matter for further investigation and information. This was agreed unanimously by the Committee.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Contractors Policy as set out in Appendix 1 be approved:

- (ii) That the Smoking at Work Policy as set out in Appendix 2 be deferred, to enable investigation of the current situation and seek further information.

101. **CUSTOMER CHARTER AND SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Committee received a report (R227, previously circulated) which considered a new Customer Charter and corresponding Service Standards.

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that the Charter would provide the framework to communicate how well the Council was doing. It set out how the Council would meet customer needs in the longer term, by setting out overarching matters. The associated Service Standards set out more specific details on how the Charter would work.

Councillor Julia Huffer thought the Charter and Standards were excellent. It was suggested that Appendix 1 should be a mailshot to members of the public, as it set out what they should expect from the Council. Councillor David Ambrose Smith contended that it should be sent to parish councils as well.

Councillor Anna Bailey praised the document that set out the expectations, with good realistic targets, and how the Council was performing.

It was resolved:

That the new Customer Charter and corresponding Service Standards be agreed.

102. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTS**

The Committee received a report (R228, previously circulated) which outlined the end of year performances and new Service Delivery Plans for a number of Council services.

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that there was some inconsistency with the report format, as some reports had been received after the deadline. It was recommended that the Committee continue to endorse the Performance Management process and re-enforce that managers recognise the importance of the Performance Management work.

Last year a request had been made to change the report cycle, so that it fitted in with the appraisal and budget cycles. This would happen next year. A new template would be used, so there would be one clear and concise document used in the future.

Performance Management

The Performance Management Officer stated that the last year had been very successful. Highlights included:

- A report had been delivered to 37,000 homes;
- Work had continued to support Service Leads;

- A new Service Delivery Plan document had been introduced to streamline the process.

Next year there would be a new end-of-year report and a new Human Resources and Payroll management system would be project managed, to automate current manual processes. The Payroll system had 2 potential options to be considered and work was currently ongoing to consider the future of the Council's intranet.

Councillor Dan Schumann acknowledged that this work was not the most glamorous but was very important and would increase in importance.

Councillor Anna Bailey considered the new format really good, as it gave a simple but detailed understanding of matters. It was very important to support efficiency savings and the streamlining of services.

Building Control

The Director, Operations offered apologies for the absence of the Senior Building Control Surveyors and advised the Committee that, although there had been problems with one member of staff off on long-term illness, the service had exceeded its targets. Despite additional pressure from external competition it had maintained its market share, including overseeing two major projects at Lancaster Way and the Ely by-pass. For the future a new look website would be introduced to help promote the service.

Councillor Dan Schumann left the meeting at this point.

The Director, Operations continued, stating that the service was looking to recruit a trainee surveyor and would undertake a customer survey about the service on how it could improve.

Councillor Jo Webber had dealings with the service and had found it fantastic. It built up a rapport with builders and provided a good and supportive experience.

Councillor Anna Bailey was concerned whether, as budgets got tighter, the service could become self-financing. This was important, as the area was growing and building was increasing. In response, the Committee was informed that the team was conscious of that and aspired to visit the same day an enquiry was received. The area it could work within was getting smaller, due to the numbers of approved inspectors around, but it would continue to work with the Council's Planning department and Business Manager.

Environmental Services

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that some figures had been unable to be supplied within the report but were now available for viewing. The amended document showing those numbers would be published.

It had been a busy year for the Commercial team, Domestic team and Care & Repair. Care & Repair had seen a significant increase in its workload, due to the increased funding available, meaning more work could be done. Additional

funding from Sanctuary had been secured and it was anticipated that more capital funding would be forthcoming. Processes had been improved and speeded up. A county-wide adaptations policy was being drawn up and was due next year. By working with other neighbouring local authorities, the new policy would allow a consistent approach.

Other highlights included:

- More installations through the Energy Partnership;
- The Domestic team had responded to a massive number of planning consultations;
- The number of housing issues reported had increased;
- A better response had been achieved when charging for the Hygiene Rating course;
- 2 lengthy accident investigations had been completed;
- A Health and Happiness Day had been held;
- Health Champions had been appointed for the workplace.

Councillor Anna Bailey was pleased that more disabled facilities grant funding was being used and wondered whether this would make Care & Repair self-supporting. Increased funding meant that more work could be delivered. What opportunities would there be for the whole department to increase income and within what timescale?

The Committee was informed that Care & Repair would look at its internal processes to speed things up. The department would offer food business coaching, to improve hygiene ratings, and charged an hourly fee for that. It was difficult to set a target for that, as it would be the first year this happened, though between £500-1000 was hoped for. Once a new Technical Officer was appointed, they would be touting for more business.

Councillor Peter Creswell thought it was a splendid report but queried whether a Dog Warden service was still provided and what were the consequences of one officer leaving? It was revealed that a part-time Dog Warden service was available, with one officer dealing with dog barking complaints and stray dogs. The officer also did visits and provided information talks. Publicity to promote that service could be done through newsletters and working with parish councils. An Enforcement Officer had left and consideration was being taken on how to proceed. This presented an opportunity to look at different related issues to judge whether improvements could be made.

Human Resources

The Human Resources Manager advised the Committee of the key areas from the last year:

- 84 staff members had been rated as 'excellent' or 'outstanding';
- The job evaluation project was nearing completion;
- The Performance Management scheme and Governance Policy had both been updated.

Next year the department would be involved with the introduction of the new Human Resources and Payroll system and the waste service staff transfers.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought the Performance Management framework went well and thanks were offered for a job well done on job evaluation. The review of the Human Resources webpages had been included in the forward plan, but reviewing each service's webpages should be in each service plan.

Councillor Peter Cresswell questioned whether officers had to bid for training funding from the corporate budget and whether this was aligned to each service. The Human Resources Manager explained that requests for professional training were highlighted in staff appraisals and an amount in the budget was allocated for such training. There was an additional budget for other in-house or external training courses.

Licensing

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that, during a very busy year, new policies had been created and implemented. New legislation, the Immigration Act, had an impact. Overall 994 licence applications had been processed, though the number of taxi licence applications had reduced. This was a result of the licences running for a 2-year period but this had led to an increase in income. There was also an ongoing process of increasing fees incrementally until they reached the appropriate level.

Work had been set up and fees set for scrap metal licences, so no income would be lost. The foundations had been set to produce a competent and effective team. Attempts were also being made to make the process as paperless as possible.

Next year there were plans to review the taxi drivers' "blue book" and make the public-facing policies more understandable.

Councillor Anna Bailey noted the cost of the service and thought that tracking targets and reducing costs should be an ambition.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith acknowledged that there were 10 different licences that the service had to deal with. Given that, it was reassuring that the training provided and advice given were excellent.

Councillor Julia Huffer sat on the Licensing Committee and had noticed how the Senior Licensing Officer had transformed the Licensing service. This should be applauded.

Housing and Community Safety

The Housing and Community Safety Manager advised the Committee that it had been an exciting year with lots of positive media coverage of the department's work. This had included a continued zero spend on bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless people, even though 240 households were designated as homeless. Bed-and-breakfast accommodation would be available if the need arose and costs incurred for that could be recovered. However the Government had just granted the Council an additional £160,000 for 2017/18 and £191,000 for 2018/19 to bolster prevention initiatives. This

money was ring-fenced and work was under way to consider filling the gaps the service had. One of these was floating support for people with mental health issues and supported accommodation for people with mental health issues. Community hubs had been introduced and it was hoped to increase these across the district. The department had also coped with 2 full-time officers spending some significant time off on maternity leave.

Councillor Mike Rouse was very proud of what the department had achieved. The drop-in service had brought agencies together and had created good publicity. There was, though, a constant need to 'stay ahead of the game', to avoid any bad publicity through a drop in service levels. Members had to be active to help improve and support the department. It faced a challenge in providing accommodation and facilities for homeless families and would need other imaginative schemes to assist this. Great credit should be given to a small team who had done extremely well.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith queried whether flat-pack housing could be used to house those people. There was also concern about the standard of some Sanctuary Housing properties, as people could not afford to improve them thereby leaving them in a poor state. People with mental health illnesses were not having money spent on helping them, so what ideal surroundings could be provided?

Councillor Anna Bailey would want to hear from other local authorities about the use of flat-pack housing for comparison. The Housing and Community Safety Manager stated that, in conjunction with the Homelessness Reduction Bill, gaps in the provision of mental health sufferers could be identified and explored. Mental health issues were increasing, particularly amongst young men, but there was no support currently available for them. This would be looked at.

The Committee was then assured that the department were working closely with Sanctuary, who had planned maintenance but were struggling to get the works done quickly. Councillor Jo Webber was worried about the state of the hostel in Littleport, as the manager was struggling and needed help. It was revealed that, although the outside of the building looked bad, the inside was in good condition.

Councillor Julia Huffer raised the question of help for ex-offenders. The Housing and Community Safety Manager informed the Committee that those people contacted the Council for help. Prisons had also been visited, so that a link would be available to help those people before they were released from prison.

Planning

The Planning Manager stated that the department had major problems due to an Idox system failure, which resulted in planning validations dropping to 32% during the year. However, once the problem had been fixed great efforts had been made to improve that figure, resulting in a year-end result of 71% validations. Due to the increased number of applications, 47% for planning and 93% pre-applications, fee income had risen. Other highlights included:

- The Enforcement Team had completed 100% of preliminary investigations within the time limit;
- E-newsletters had been produced and circulated;
- A Twitter page was up and running;
- Parish councils had been visited, to explain the planning processes and help build relationships;
- Some pro-active enforcement action had started in Littleport and would be rolled out to Ely.

Councillor Mike Rouse had left the Chamber by this point.

Next year the department would be introducing a facebook page, expand the Twitter page, increase visits to listed buildings and introduce fees for listed buildings advice. Part of the application fee for invalid applications would be retained, to help cover the costs involved. Support would be provided for the development of the Downham Road site and work would continue with other agencies. Information leaflets would be updated and information videos would be published on the website.

Councillor Anna Bailey acknowledged the incredible amount of work that had gone through the Planning department and the horrendous problems caused by the Idox problem. The level of fee income achieved was above and beyond the expected amounts and was due to the work done by the department. A great job had been done under difficult circumstances.

Councillor Peter Cresswell queried whether the level of fees achieved would be reported to the Corporate Governance and Finance Committee. It was revealed that this had already happened.

Councillor Alan Sharp thought the visits to the parish councils had been very good and thanked officers for their assistance. These visits helped explain the differing issues associated with planning matters.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith was unhappy that retrospective planning applications went through, as this was unfair on the people going through the processes correctly. Could the Council charge them more? The Planning Manager explained that the fees were set by Government and could not be amended, so there was nothing the department could do but accept those applications.

Waste Services

The Waste Services Team Leader reminded the Committee that the main focus this year had been on future service provision from 2018. It had been decided to provide this service through the East Cambridgeshire Trading Company. Consequently, next year everything had to be put into place to enable this transfer to occur. The staff currently employed by Veolia would be transferred over and had been very positive and receptive to this.

It was anticipated that the recycling rates could be maintained, even though other local authorities' rates were dropping. Street cleansing had been an ongoing problem and had fallen short of its target, though it was slightly better

than the previous year. Missed bins collections had been worse but the numbers had started to come down.

Councillor Anna Bailey wanted clarification over the recycling figure of 56.5%. The Waste Services Team Leader explained that the figures were dependent on the amount of green waste recycled. Additional promotional work would be done to help the rates.

Councillor Julia Huffer thought the performance of the external contractor showed that the service needed to come in-house, so the Council could monitor and control the service better. The small waste team had done a brilliant job over the last year.

Customer Services

The Customer Services Manager reminded the Committee that a new website had been introduced last November. This meant that, although there were a lot less webpages, visitor numbers had increased. Other highlights included:

- The Customer Relationship Management system had been further developed;
- The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) service was now delivered across the front-of-house teams;
- Abandoned telephone calls were now less than 10%;
- Service Champions were helping their services once a week.

The new Service Delivery Plan built on current services and aimed to develop a web governance policy, review the online focus, develop the self-service portal, prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit and maintain a waste collection database. Maximising the commercialisation of the website, possibly including sponsorships and advertising, would help support other services.

Councillor Jo Webber stated that the young team did so much more than was expected. The transformation programme was hard work, as had the transition to working with ARP.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought that the working with ARP gave the staff a proper insight into the work and was brilliant for the staff. Expertise might be required to maximise the opportunities to develop the commercial aspects across the Council.

Legal Services

The Legal Services Manager stated that the Legal Services Service Delivery Champion had seen the final report and was happy with it. Initially the Manager was the only legal officer at the Council and had received support from Peterborough unitary authority, but this arrangement would be re-visited. 2 trainees had been recruited but 1 had since decided to leave. The remaining trainee was enthusiastic, so the focus would be on developing them.

Legal Services had managed to deliver a better service than targeted for, though the response to Freedom of Information (FOI) or Data Protection Act (DPA) requests was under target. The majority of responses relied on

obtaining relevant information from ARP or other departments, resulting in delays. A lot of work had gone into supporting the devolution process by developing the constitution of the new authority.

Councillor Anna Bailey reckoned the FOI responses were very good, as they were always turned around as soon as possible, even though some were quite complex. 'Persistent offenders' delaying responses to DPA requests should be spoken to, so response rates could be improved. It was queried why the recovery of court costs was a target if the awarding of costs was not the responsibility of the Council. Therefore this should not be included as part of the Service Delivery Plan.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the end of year performance reports and new Service Delivery Plans for the following services be agreed:
 - Performance Management
 - Building Control
 - Environmental Services
 - Licensing
 - Housing and Community Services
 - Planning
 - Waste
 - Customer Services
 - Human Resources
 - Legal Services;
- (ii) That the Performance Management process be endorsed and re-enforce that managers recognise the importance of the Performance Management work.

103. **COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee received a report (R229, previously circulated) which considered the Council's Communication and Public Relations Services forward agenda plan for March to May 2017.

The Committee was advised that the Forward Plan had been revised and externalised, following the Committee's request to make it more 'professional'. Requests had been made to the Communications team to publicise the changes at the Princess of Wales Hospital, Ely and the projected digging up of Cambridge Road, Ely.

It was resolved:

That the forward agenda plan for the Council's Communications and Public Relations Service for March to May 2017, as per the Appendix attached, be noted.

104. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Forward Agenda Plan was received. The Smoking Policy report would be added to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm.