

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely
on Monday 27th June 2016 at 4:30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Carol Sennitt
Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Jo Webber

OTHERS PRESENT

Jo Brooks – Director, Operations
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Mark Chadwick – Principal ICT Officer
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities 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

20. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

21. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Christine Ambrose Smith, David Ambrose Smith, Mike Bradley, Peter Cresswell, Lis Every and Neil Hitchin.

22. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

23. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

24. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- With the permission of the Committee, the agenda running order would be changed to include an exempt urgent item, that would be considered during the Exempt session after agenda item number 7.
- Additional information would be tabled relating to agenda item number 12, thereby making it an exempt item, so this would be considered after the urgent item.

25. **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 and 12 and the urgent item 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).

26. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS AND RESIGNATIONS**

The Committee received an exempt report (R35, previously circulated) which provided details of staff appointments, transfers and resignations for the period 1st to 31st March 2016.

The Human Resources Manager advised the Committee that 7 appointments had been made, there had been 5 leavers, 5 transfers over that period and 2 posts had been deleted. 1 person had resigned. The turnover was 2.7%, compared to 2.1% for the same period last year.

It was resolved:

That the content of the information report be noted.

27. **TRAVELLER SITES IN EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

The Committee received a report (R57, previously circulated) which informed the Committee of an issue relating to some travellers' sites in East Cambridgeshire. The issue had become urgent due to possible imminent legal action being taken against the Council.

The Housing & Community Safety Manager advised the Committee about the background to the situation, the work the District Council had undertaken, the lack of response from the County Council and resultant implications for this Council.

In response to Members questions, it was confirmed that the County Council had not followed up on its agreement for action relating to the sites and had ignored further communications from this Council. Therefore, action had to be taken to protect this Council. The Committee agreed to this view and therefore approved the recommendations.

It was resolved:

That the recommendation in the report be agreed.

28. **FUTURE DELIVERY OF THE COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICE**

The Committee received a report (R34, previously circulated) which sought to consider the future delivery of the Council's Communication and Public Relations Service. Subsequent to further discussions, the report had been re-designated as Exempt and revised recommendations were tabled.

The Director, Operations, advised the Committee about the background to the report, the options for future delivery of the Service and the proposal offered by the current service suppliers. A number of meetings had been held to discuss the future provision of the service. Following these, a revised set of recommendations had been drawn up and were tabled.

The Committee were content with the revised recommendations and unanimously approved them.

It was resolved:

That the revised recommendations, as tabled, be agreed.

The meeting then resumed in open session.

29. **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report (R36, previously circulated) which detailed the revised Health and Safety Policies.

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager advised the Committee that all the revised policies had been approved by the Corporate Management Team and the Health and Safety Work Group. A number of policies had been revised and updated. The Accident/Near Miss Reporting Policy had been updated to make the reporting process quicker. The Driving at Work Policy had been revised to include the changes for the new style plastic driving licences and how licences were now checked. The Fire Safety Policy had been brought up-to-date. The Health Surveillance Policy was aimed at ground staff and included timescales for injuries and details of drivers using Council vehicles. The Legionella Management Policy had been highlighted by the new Health & Safety Officer. This had led to proper procedures being put in place. The Violence and Aggression Policy would ensure that procedures were in place and staff suitably trained.

Councillor Anna Bailey appreciated the succinct format of the policies and the hard work that had gone into putting them together.

Councillor Alan Sharp noted that the Driving at Work Policy mentioned that if people had not got the correct documents then they would not be paid. He was concerned about threats of violence in non-public places that would not be reported to the Police, though they ought to be. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager informed the Committee that people with the incorrect driving documents could be open to a financial penalty, but some leeway would be given. Some of the incidents of threatening behaviour could be reported to the Police, depending on the degree of seriousness of the incident.

It was resolved:

That the Health and Safety Policies set out in Appendices 1-5 be approved.

30. **ANNUAL REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Committee received a report (R38, previously circulated) which provided the annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the responsibility of this Committee.

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that Outside Bodies consisted of a whole range of different organisations which had responsibility for various matters affecting the district. Usually Council officers suggested that Council appoint Member representatives onto an Outside Body. The Members appointed by the Committee under its remit were shown in Appendix 1. Every year the Representatives were asked to report back to the Committee on the activities of the Outside Bodies and their reports were shown in Appendix 2.

Councillor Anna Bailey noted that some of the Outside Bodies had not held any meetings that year and queried whether continued representation was appropriate. The Committee should expect the Representatives themselves to provide that information.

It was resolved:

That the annual reports from appointed Council representatives on the activities and manner in which funding was spent by the Outside Bodies within the responsibility of the Regulatory & Support Services Committee be noted.

31. **END OF YEAR REPORTING AND NEW SERVICE PLANS**

The Committee received a report (R37, previously circulated) which considered the end of year reports and new service delivery plans for a number of Council services.

The Performance Management Officer reminded the Committee that the report gave an update on performance during 2015/16 and set out service plans for 2016/17 which were linked those plans to the Corporate Plan.

Legal Services

The Legal Services Manager summarised the Service's remit to offer advice and assist Council departments and committees on matters of law. It also investigated complaints, undertook land searches, dealt with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, data protection and car parking ticket appeals. The Service had done particularly well dealing with FOI requests, exceeding the statutory requirements, and recovering costs and fees. However, improvements were needed in turning around car parking appeals, which had fallen due to the rise in the number of appeals and the volume of work elsewhere. The Service was looking to recruit two other members of staff to fill the gaps.

Councillor Mark Hugo, the Legal Services Service Delivery Champion, knew the department had been very busy over the last year but had achieved or exceeded most of its targets, even though there were staff shortages. The change in the law regarding land searches would have an impact on the staff and there was some concern about the integrity of the data that would be handed over.

Councillor Ann Bailey queried whether the department had been working on how to deal with the land searches hand over. It was noted that performance for dealing with parking appeals had slipped to 87% and the question was raised whether Customer Services could take on this work if it was fairly straight forward and legal training would not be required. The Legal Services Manager revealed that the number of parking appeals had risen significantly over the last year and Members could be informed of the actual numbers involved.

Customer Services

The Customer Services Manager advised the Committee that the Service had been extremely busy over the last twelve months, for example, dealing with 63,000 telephone calls. 56% of queries were resolved at the first point of contact. A lot of time had been taken integrating the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which should help streamline some processes. Other work completed included the introduction of a new complaints system and creating 'service champions' within the team to support back office services.

For 2016/17, the previous year's work would be built on and a new Council website would be obtained to make it better for the customers to interact with the Council. The 'service champions' would be developed by getting them to 'shadow' services and consultation would be undertake on amalgamating the staff in Reception with staff from the partner organisations.

Councillor Jo Webber, Customer Services Service Delivery Champion, stated that the work done on implementing the new CRM could not be underestimated, as a massive amount of work had been put in. The 'service

champions' initiative had been a success and would be built on. The team was also looking at new ways to become more commercial.

Human Resources

The Human Resources Manager's department had also has a busy year. The department was currently down to one member of staff but the Council was attempting to recruit new staff. Key outputs included the implementation of the Family Friendly Working guidance, the follow-up pulse survey and the new performance appraisal scheme. The department would be working with the Information Technology department to see how procedures could be made more efficient. Other work to be completed would include the review of pay arrangements, the setting up of a Pay Increments Panel, the timely conclusion to the Job Evaluation project and rolling out of the project management training programme.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

The Principal ICT Officer advised the Committee that the department had met most of its targets, which had been achieved whilst also supporting the Council's infrastructure. WiFi had been implemented in the Council offices and in Oliver Cromwell's House, which would allow a room to be hired out. The department had ensured that the Council's information was delivered safe and secure and had supported the Local Authority Trading Company's network systems. In March the ICT and Data Support Officer had achieved the Gold standard for the quality of data provided.

Next year the ICT department would help deliver the transformation programme, aid the running of the various projects and take over the telephony systems, all on top of its everyday tasks.

Councillor Paul Cox, a Service Delivery Champion for ICT, noted that the issues concerning the overall strategy were being addressed. A tremendous amount of the transformation programme hung on the performance of the ICT department, as without it the programme would not succeed.

Councillor Jo Webber acknowledged that the transformation programme involved a massive amount of work, over and above its usual work. Congratulations were offered to the staff who had stepped up to help run the associated projects. The ICT and Data Support Officer provided an excellent service and was a credit to the department.

Councillor Alan Sharp was worried that there was no budget identified for staff training. This was an area where training was needed, to keep up with changing requirements. This concern was echoed by the Principal ICT Officer.

Planning Services

The Planning Manager declared that the Planning department had been very busy over the last year, with a review of the department being carried out. All targets had been hit or exceeded, with 100% tree preservation orders and planning applications meeting their targets. One issue the department had struggled with was regarding validation of planning applications, due to staff shortages. The support team had worked hard to bring the time taken on these

down. Some applications that were not valid, and planning appeals, were not within the control of the department. A focus would be made on enforcement and ensuring agreed conditions were met, with procedures put in place to monitor enforcement. Some old enforcement cases had been closed but there still remained around 100 to deal with.

The parish and Members' newsletters would continue, as would visits to parish councils. This allowed the dissemination of relevant information to assist with planning applications. Other projects included the dedication of one officer to deal with the north Ely developments, the setting up of a twitter account, publication of instruction videos on Facebook and looking to email decisions.

The Chairman brought Members attention to the submission of Councillor Lis Every, the Planning Services Service Delivery Champion, tabled at the meeting, supporting the performance of the Planning department.

Councillor Anna Bailey noted the massive increase in fee income and the astonishing number of applications the department had to deal with. The question was asked how the department had managed to stay ahead of this demand. If staffing issues became serious then Members had to be notified.

The Planning Manager revealed that planning officers should be dealing with between 30 to 40 cases but were actually dealing with 60 to 70. One full time officer had left but a new member of staff had been appointed, although untrained. Agency staff could be used to plug any gaps on a temporary basis.

Councillor Jo Webber thought the work regarding meeting with parish councils had been fantastic, as they did not always understand the complexities of planning applications. District Councillors should promote the department, so it could be proactive in helping with applications, as talking through an application made a big difference. It was good that enforcement and planning conditions were being looked at, as they were a bugbear for applicants.

The Planning Manager stated that the standard conditions used were being reviewed in conjunction with the Enforcement team, so they would be re-worded to ensure that conditions could be enforced. This would take a long time to complete and consultation was also taking place with parish councils. A Senior Support Officer post would be created to ensure that conditions were checked, so the department was becoming more active in checking and enforcing conditions. This could lead to prosecutions, which would help in the future, as the Council would not then be perceived as a 'soft touch'.

Councillor Alan Sharp conceded that planning could be a contentious issue, so adequate resources were needed within the department.

Waste Services

The Waste Services Team Leader advised the Committee that last year recycling rates had increased but not by a great deal. Nationally the trend for recycling was falling but this Council had bucked that trend and this had been helped by the publicity the Council had produced. During 2014/15 this Council had topped the list of Councils in England for recycling alongside weekly bin

collections and was 26th overall. The Department for Communities and Local Government had been impressed with the Council's service changes and reward scheme.

Street cleansing continued to be a problem, with Veolia failing to meet its target, which was also part of wider performance issues. Meetings with the contractor were ongoing to try and address these issues. Contractual arrangements for bring banks had been put in place and the three members of staff on the waste team would be retained. Services would be reviewed over the coming months and the future of waste service provision in the future would be looked at.

Councillor Julia Huffer, a Waste Services Service Delivery Champion, had been surprised with the new Veolia manager, who had grasped the problems quickly and had given some encouragement for an improved service for the remainder of the contract. The numbering of the waste and dog bins was ongoing, to help with reporting any problems.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the end of year performance reports (2015-2016) be noted;
- (ii) That the new Service Delivery Plans (2016/2017) for the following services, be approved:
 - Legal Services;
 - Customer Services;
 - Human Resources;
 - Information Communication Technology;
 - Planning Services;
 - Waste Services.

31. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its Forward Agenda Plan.

The meeting closed at 6.05pm.