

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday 30th March 2015 at 4:30pm

PRESENT

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor Derrick Beckett
Councillor Lorna Dupré
Councillor Colin Fordham
Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith (as Substitute for Councillor Sue Austen)
Councillor Charles Roberts
Councillor Hazel Williams MBE
Councillor Sue Willows

OTHERS PRESENT

Councillor Lis Every
Kathy Batey – Human Resources & Facilities Services Manager
Richard Quayle – Director, Support Services
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Tony Taylorson – Communications & Media Manager

54. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

55. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Austen and Mike Rouse and from the Director, Regulatory Services, Jo Brooks. Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith substituted for Councillor Austen for this meeting.

56. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

57. **MINUTES**

It was resolved,

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

58. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the no announcements.

59. **STAFF PULSE SURVEY RESULTS (INTERNAL COMMUNICATION 2015) – KEY FINDINGS**

The Committee received a report, reference P218 previously circulated, that presented the key findings of the first Pulse Survey on Internal Communications that was carried out in January/February 2015, together with the proposed improvement plan.

The Director, Support Services, reminded the Committee that every quarter a staff pulse survey would be held on different themes. The first one had been on internal communications, as it was an important subject. Seventy three surveys had been completed, representing a 37% return. Key issues that had been raised by staff included too much silo working, a lack of information regarding corporate objectives, priorities, budget and a general lack of communication from Management Team.

Councillor Sue Willows joined the meeting at this point, 4:37pm.

Further issues raised included a need for more staff briefings, better use of the intranet, more celebration of success and a staff suggestion scheme. Following the results an Action Plan had been formulated, which Unison welcomed, particularly the workshops and focus groups which encouraged two way communication.

The Action Plan proposed that corporate briefings be held twice a year, focus groups be set up for staff to explore issues raised, workshops within service teams to show how the corporate priorities related to the teams and how they could get involved, the introduction of a monthly news brief, ensure regular team meetings, undergo a review of the intranet, the introduction of a new awards scheme, the launch of a staff suggestion scheme and a review of the Public Relations & Press service.

Councillor Derrick Beckett enquired whether this particular pulse survey would be repeated in three months to gauge the impact of the Action Plan. The Director, Support Services, stated that it would be done after six months to see if the actions were working.

Councillor Beckett continued by saying that for the Council to be successful it needed a happy workforce. The results of the survey made it clear that the workforce had low morale and the Council was haemorrhaging people all the time. Was the Council trying to find out the cause of these problems? This survey related to communication, but this was one of the first things to break down when there were other issues.

Councillor Colin Fordham mirrored Council Beckett's views, as staff members were not happy as they were worried about their jobs.

Councillor Anna Bailey hoped that the Service Delivery Champions would understand their services and report back with issues for resolution. Management Team were also looking at a number of services closely.

The Director, Support Services, suggested that the transformation programme would help through the staff focus groups, which would look at the culture within the Council and explore relevant issues.

Councillor Hazel Williams supported the move back to the regular news brief. This would allow for staff news items which were important, and hoped it would be similar to the Vibe, a previous version which had official news plus lighter news items. It was really important for Councillors, as otherwise they would miss out on information.

The Communications & Media Manager informed the Committee that the Vibe had meant to include staff items but it had been found that after six months such items had been exhausted. Some staff had been enthusiastic in supplying items but such news had run out. Now the bigger picture would be looked at but news of staff was expected to be included.

Councillor Charles Roberts was concerned about the number of people who had not been fully briefed about the corporate objectives, particularly as the Council was not a huge organisation. Therefore, people did not feel very involved and it appeared to be a management problem where information was not been cascaded down to staff. The proposed newsletters should not be a substitute for managers, who should be checked to see that they were managing their staff.

To help, structured team meetings should be held monthly wherever possible. For some services it may be necessary to be held every two months, where this is the case they should be monitored, particularly for client facing teams. Corporate briefings for staff should be held quarterly rather than six monthly.

The Director, Support Services, thought it important to make sure that the corporate priorities were embedded in service delivery plans and staff appraisals.

Councillor Hazel Williams concurred with Councillor Roberts, as six months was a long time. It was important to cascade information down regularly and back up. With regards the award scheme, it would be easier for some staff in some departments to be rewarded compared to other departments and this needed to be considered.

Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith thought that face-to-face contact was more effective than via email. When would the Chief Executive be doing his briefings? It was revealed that six had been planned and all had been completed bar one.

Councillor Friend-Smith continued, although he agreed to the award scheme some staff did not like the award ceremony as it was too 'public' for them. The survey had given some worrying signs but there was no disagreement with what was being proposed to improve things. The Human Resources & Facilities Services Manager had made it easy to reply to the survey but should look at using an electronic method of conducting the survey.

The Director, Support Services, reminded the Committee that the survey before last had received over 60% return rate and it was hoped that once the Action Plan was delivered higher response rates would be generated for future surveys.

The Chairman highlighted the suggestion to change team meetings to a monthly basis, though there was some concern about enforcing this. The Performance Officer could be asked to monitor the frequency of such meetings. The Human Resources & Facilities Services Manager explained that two months had been proposed due to the different teams within the Council as monthly meetings might not be appropriate for every team.

Councillor Lis Every joined the meeting at this point – 5:00pm.

Councillor Roberts was not too concerned about monthly meetings, provided the managers managed the situation, but the two monthly suggestion should not be allowed to slip. There was a real need to cascade information down frequently. The staff would take these surveys seriously if they could see a response to their replies.

Councillor Derrick Beckett thought the idea to meet monthly was better, although it might be good for some teams but not for those whose members were scattered.

A proposal was made to make the corporate briefings a quarterly event and the officer's recommendation with this amendment was agreed.

It was resolved:

That the key findings from the Pulse Survey be noted and the implementation of the action plan (Appendix 1), including the amendment to hold corporate briefings on a quarterly basis, be approved for immediate effect following the end of the consultation period with the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).

60. **REVIEW OF ICT SERVICE**

The Committee received a report, reference P219 previously circulated, that considered the terms of reference of the proposed review of the Information Communications Technology (ICT) Service.

The Director, Support Services, reminded the Committee that back in 2013, the 'root-and-branch' review highlighted a number of areas requiring improvement relating to ICT. The report set out how the ICT service review would be conducted and would involve the Director, Support Services, and the Principal ICT Officer. Updates would be reported to the ICT Champion, the Chairman of this Committee and the Financial Services Champion, with a report coming to this Committee in October giving the findings and proposed plan.

The review would look at the future need of the Council, how the service was currently performing, how the team was set up for the future challenge and how

efficient it was. The Council's transformation programme would put additional pressure on the ICT service, so it was important that the ICT service was focused on priorities. Service capacity would also be considered where it would add most value. The review would include a comparison with other service providers, consultation and the best way forward for the service.

Councillor Lorna Dupré noted that the report had little focus on the public. ICT was not just for Council services and Members but was increasingly needed for the public. So consideration should be made on how the public wanted to use it, as this could also help staff. The review should be re-visited to include this.

The Director, Support Services, explained that the Transformation Programme would be considering customer requirements, which would then feed into the ICT review. A report on the Transformation Programme would be brought back to this Committee.

Councillor Charles Roberts thought there was an obvious need to respond to the public but this review was about how the ICT service was performing and delivering its service in-house and about why the service was being delivered as it was.

Councillor Derrick Beckett accepted the review would seek an improvement to provide a more efficient service, but queried whether the compare element of the review would go to the work place or service industries. It was then revealed that the intention was to seek best practice anywhere.

Councillor Hazel Williams would be worried if the Council just looked within its family group of Councils, as the compare element was really important so the wider range the better to get a useful outcome.

The Chairman requested that, as well as the Corporate Management Team, this Committee be updated, by email, on the progress of this review.

It was resolved:

That the terms of reference and scope of the Service review be approved.

61. **SUPPORT SERVICES PROVISION – MARKETS, TOWN CENTRES AND TOURISM/PLANNING**

The Committee received a report, reference P220 previously circulated, that provided an update on how Support Services were implementing a 'business partnering' approach with Council departments.

The Director, Support Services, advised the Committee that the support services in question were Customer Services, Financial Services, Human Resources and Facilities, Legal Services, Information Communication Technology and Performance Management. The intention of the approach was to improve the services provided by getting the services to work together in a more co-ordinated way and was being trialled by the Markets, Town Centres and Tourism service and the Planning service.

The Markets, Town Centres and Tourism service had targets to increase its income to cover its costs. The service was looking at number of improvements, which were highlighted in the report. There were a lot of issues to consider but many could be, and had been, resolved with simple resolutions.

The Planning service had three main areas of concern. The first related to accessing multiple sources of information at the same time, so the use of dual screens was being rolled out across the department. Tablets had also been trialled for use outside the offices but there had been problems with mobile coverage. Lastly, a case management system was going to be investigated to help allocate and monitor officer workload and progress.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought it was important that the Committee had seen the details of these plans, as some tiny things could have a huge impact. It was the intention to roll this programme out across the Council and this should also have benefits as regards communication.

Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith stated that face-to-face communication was more effective and the reaction of staff following the meetings for these trials had proved that.

Councillor Lorna Dupré considered it good to access data in the field but accepted that mobile coverage was better in some city centres. Could the local authority take the community lead with coverage provider companies, as there was some urgency for provision in East Cambridgeshire?

Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith left the meeting at this point, 5:28pm.

Councillor Charles Roberts thought the report was excellent and expected any obligations highlighted during the approach to be incorporated in relevant service delivery plans.

It was resolved:

That the progress made be noted.

62. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its forward agenda plan.

It was resolved:

That the forward agenda plan be noted.

63. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining agenda items no. 11 to 12 because it is 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 4 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

64. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS, RESIGNATIONS AND TRENDS**

The Committee received a report, reference P221 previously circulated, that detailed staff appointments, transfers and resignations for January 2015.

In response to Councillor Derrick Beckett's queried staff exit interviews, as he was concerned that any comments made by leaving staff could follow them to their next jobs. This called into question the truthfulness of the reasons given for leaving the Council. So this process should be anonymous.

The Human Resources & Facilities Services Manager revealed that staff had a choice about their exit interviews, as they could be done face-to-face or by filling a form and dropping it in. The staff could be identified via the form, so that if any issues were raised then they could be followed up.

It was resolved:

That the content of the information report be noted.

65. **EXEMPT JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE NOTES**

It was resolved:

That the notes of the Joint Consultative Committee be noted.

The meeting closed at 5:34pm.