



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2017 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Gugnani (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Cank
Councillor Cutkelvin

Councillor Fonseca
Councillor Khote

In Attendance:

Councillor Master, Assistant City Mayor - Neighbourhood Services

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28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Although not a member of the Commission, Councillor Sood, (Assistant City Mayor – Communities and Equalities), submitted apologies for absence, as she regularly attended the Commission's meetings.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission held on 6 September 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

31. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Vice-Chair reminded Members that, further to item 1 of the agreed matters

under minute 23, "Social Welfare Advice Re-Procurement", a letter had been sent in response to the consultation, setting out the issues raised by the Commission. This letter had been circulated to all members of the Commission.

32. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

On behalf of the Commission, the Vice-Chair congratulated Councillor Malik, the former Chair of this Commission, on his appointment as an Assistant City Mayor and wished him well in his new role.

The Vice-Chair also thanked Councillor Waddington, who had recently ceased to be an Assistant City Mayor, for her regular attendance at this Commission, her contribution to debates at Commission meetings and her engagement with the Commission's work.

33. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

34. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

35. CHANNEL SHIFT UPDATE

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance presented a report summarising the Council's channel shift programme. The current key areas of activity were outlined, including the move to putting routine and high volume transactions on the Council's website and rationalising telephone contact.

The Director drew attention to the following points:

- MyAccount, customers' online portal in to the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, had been operating for about a year. There currently were approximately 30,000 users, who could make approximately 70 different transactions through the system
- Feedback on MyAccount had been very positive and was being used to constantly improve customers' experience of the system;
- Self-service facilities were being installed in various locations across the city, in conjunction with the Council's Transforming Neighbourhood Services programme. These included those for self-scanning of documents;
- Automated transactions were those where an on-line request fed directly to the service concerned, so there was no requirement for someone to

complete a form and / or key the information in to an IT system. This was progressing well, with many previous inefficiencies being addressed;

- Future plans included consideration of introducing a “web chat” facility, potentially in 2018, through a telephony service;
- Monitoring of the measures being introduced showed a reduction in the number of telephone calls being made to the Customer Service helpline and a corresponding increase in on-line transactions;
- The efficiency of a process was measured by mapping the process currently being used, business opportunities this presented, the impact of channel shift on that particular process, and measurement after channel shift had completed of any savings made and changes in customer contact.

Members expressed concern that people who could not use computers were being disadvantaged. An example was given of a form that stated that people could do transactions by telephone, computer or face-to-face, but this was not reflected in the experience received in the Customer Service Centre for that enquiry. The Director asked for details to be provided, so that this could be followed up. Members expressed concerns that, where residents were not able to use ICT, the contact was being redirected through Councillors’ enquiries.

Members asked for confirmation of who was leading the programme at Executive level and whether a programme manager had been recruited. The Director confirmed that the City Mayor was the Executive Lead and a Programme Manager had started in this current week.

There also had been problems with forms being unavailable on-line. For example, school admissions were now processed on-line, but there had been problems with the forms not being available when people were trying to use them. The Senior Project Manager advised the Commission that this problem had been resolved, although Members were asked to notify officers if it happened again.

Members suggested that a further barrier to channel shift was the way in which self-service kiosks were being introduced. In one location it was known that no member of staff had been available to help people use newly installed kiosks for over two weeks. Staff in all locations with self-service facilities needed to take responsibility for the equipment and ensuring that it could be used by the public.

The Director confirmed that it was recognised that people using the new methods of transacting with the Council could need support in doing so. Mechanisms therefore had been put in place to provide this support. Members suggested that including telephones in the self-service locations could work against channel shift and asked whether consideration should be given to removing them. The Director agreed this was not in line with the vision and it would be something to consider going forward.

Members noted that the newly appointed Director of Digital Transformation and Smart Cities had undertaken some evaluation of issues where channel shift could facilitate a move away from face-to-face customer interaction. An audit of how customer contact was managed by services had been done across the organisation, covering 70 different service areas. This was helping to inform channel shift work going forward.

The Director of Digital Transformation also was considering how progress in channel shift should be measured in the future. Although the initial focus had been on MyAccount and the CRM system, a lot of customer contact was managed through other IT systems. A potential problem with incorporating these in to the channel shift programme was that some software suppliers did not want to work with the Council to provide a way of linking their system to MyAccount. Finding a way of making different systems work together therefore was problematic.

Members acknowledged that the provision of on-line services would be important in the future, but stressed the need to present them in a way that made them accessible to all. For example, it was known that some city residents had language barriers to accessing services, so Members asked that ways of overcoming these be considered. One way of doing this could be to train community “champions”, including younger people, in how to undertake on-line transactions and help support others in their communities.

It was noted that some pages on the Council’s web site were out of date. For example, some links still went to items from a number of years ago, so it was requested that links be checked and updated. The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance asked Members to advise her or the digital media team of any links that needed updating.

Members queried whether payment kiosks would be installed in all of the multi-service hubs that were being created across the city. The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance undertook to find out, noting that payment kiosks could be targeted at sites where there previously had been Housing offices at which people could make payments.

The Commission also queried how well scanning facilities were being used at the self-service points and whether there were plans to extend these facilities to other locations. In reply, the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance advised that consideration had been given to where these facilities should be located and it was felt that they should not automatically be installed in every location, but just used where a need was identified.

The Commission also queried how well scanning facilities were being used at the self-service points and whether there were plans to extend these facilities to other locations. In reply, the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance advised that at present they had only been installed in the Customer Service Centre in Granby Street. Consideration was being given to where these facilities should be located and it was felt that they should not automatically be installed in every location, but just where a need was

identified.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance also confirmed that data was available on how well the current self-service kiosks were being used. If the telephone at these points was being well used, careful consideration would need to be given to whether it should be removed to avoid it undermining channel shift. The volume of face-to-face contact also would need to be assessed, to help identify the number of people needing help and / or support and what sort of help / support they needed.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance also confirmed that data was available on how well the current self-service kiosks were being used. Members also were interested in data which showed whether face to face contact was shifting to focus more on supporting the vulnerable and for more complex transactions, in line with the vision.

In response to a question, the Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services advised the Commission that the possibility of introducing card payments in all Council car parks was being considered.

In response to a further question, the Director of Digital Transformation and Smart Cities explained that the term “smart city” could mean different things in different places and part of her role was to identify what it could mean for Leicester in the future. Technology would play a key role in this, but the citizen experience and digital inclusion needed to be central.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance / Director of Digital Transformation and Smart Cities be asked to:
 - a) confirm what self-serve facilities it is proposed to install at St Barnabas library;
 - b) as part of the programme, consider whether provision of telephones in the neighbourhood localities undermines the channel shift principle and whether they are retained going forward;
 - c) consider ways of improving community inclusion in channel shift, for example by overcoming language barriers, this to include the possibility of training community “champions” to support others in the community in undertaking on-line transactions;
 - d) ensure that links on the Council’s website go to current pages;
 - e) advise Members whether self-service payment kiosks are to be installed in all of the Council’s multi-service hubs;

- f) advise Members of what data can be provided by the self-service hubs; and
 - g) provide a timeline of key milestones in the channel shift programme as soon as possible; and
- 2) That all Members be asked to advise either the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance or the digital media team of any links on the Council website that do not go to current pages.

36. COMMUNITY LANGUAGES

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report giving an overview of the Council's approach to the provision of community languages, and in particular the role of the Community Language Service. The Vice-Chair reminded Members that this report had been requested at the meeting of this Commission held on 12 July 2017, (minute 11, "Portfolio Overview July 2017", referred).

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance noted that it would not be possible to employ a team that spoke all of the languages for which services were provided. Some members of the team could interpret some languages, but if other languages were needed, freelance translators were used.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance noted that it would not be possible to employ a team that spoke all of the languages for which services were provided. Some members of the team could interpret some languages, but if other languages were needed, freelance translators and interpreters were used. Most of the freelance workers were locally based, but for some much less common languages it was sometimes necessary to source them via a national database.

Work internal and external to the Council was undertaken, with charges being made for the latter. This work was undertaken on a reactive basis, as the high turnover of translators made it inefficient to provide training in specific tasks, such as form filling, or to have community "champions" for specific languages.

Consideration needed to be given to The Council's Public Sector Duty to ensure there were no barriers to residents accessing the services they needed, as language could be a barrier. The Council's Equalities team worked with services to help address this. On occasions challenges had been made about the languages used for information distributed in the city, but these challenges had not been upheld, as the Council's use of community languages had been found to be good.

Members enquired whether the Council employed an officer dedicated to assisting refugees and others arriving in the city with no, or minimal, English language skills. In reply, the Director advised that this work was undertaken

across a number of service areas.

Members stressed the need to ensure that all documents were produced in plain language and abbreviations should be avoided, to help the general public's understanding of those documents. It was suggested that one example of a document not meeting those standards was the letter sent out with Council Tax information.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance be asked to identify whether one language predominates in the requests for interpretation and translation received by Children's Services teams; and
- 2) That the report be noted.

37. WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission noted that a draft scoping document had been prepared for a review of knife crime in the city. Officers had been requested to also prepare a report on actions being taken in the city on this issue. It was anticipated that the scoping document and report would both be considered at the Commission's next meeting.

Members suggested that information on work being done by the Council to address barriers created by language and IT skills be brought to the next meeting of the Commission. The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance advised the Commission that consideration would be given to whether this fell within this Commission's remit, or that of Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission, and a report would be presented to this Commission if appropriate.

Members noted that the Housing Scrutiny Commission would be considering a report on work being done to reduce the impact of the government's welfare reforms on city residents and asked that members of this Commission be invited to attend the Housing Scrutiny Commission for that discussion.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance be asked to determine whether consideration of the barriers created by language and IT skills falls within the remit of this Commission and, if it does, to present a report to its next meeting on what work the Council is doing to address these barriers;
- 2) That the Democratic and Civic Support Manager be asked to liaise with the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Commission to request that members of this Commission be invited to attend the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission at which consideration is to be given to work being done to reduce the

impact of the government's welfare reforms on city residents;
and

3) That this Commission's work programme be received and noted.

38. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm