

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2015

Present: Councillor Mrs Gooch (Chairman), and
Councillors Ash, Black, Butler, Mrs Grigg, Pickett and
Mrs Stockell

122. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be webcast.

123. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Edwards-Daem and Long.

124. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members.

125. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting Members.

126. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

127. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be take in public as proposed.

128. QUARTER 3 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK (COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA) REPORT

The Research and Performance Officer, Sam Bailey, introduced the report detailing the complaints and compliments received by the Council, and also depicting the social media trends over Quarter 3, and asked the Committee to note the feedback briefing included at appendix A.

Members heard that the Policy and Information Team had employed an Information Officer, responsible for handling complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests received by the Council, who provided a more consistent approach to complaint handling.

Special mention was made of Planning Support, as although they had closed four of six complaints late, it was clear that complainants had been engaged with. Three of the six complaints were about the time taken to validate applications. All complaints were justified and the responses apologised to customers, explained the reasons for delays and outlined the actions being taken to improve performance. One complaint was about how the website operated for planning applications, and suggested some changes to improve the site. These changes have now been implemented.

During discussion the following matters were raised:

- There was a desire to be able to see the wording of complaints in the same manner in which the wording of compliments was displayed in the report.
- The Policy and Performance Officer, Clare Wood, advised that she was working with the Interim Head of Planning Support to create and manage performance indicators which would be monitored from April 2015 onwards. The backlog in Planning Support had been reduced as additional staff had been brought in to assist, and the data depicted improvement.
- The complaints system RFI had been in place for two years. A recent update had provided further functionality which would allow it to become a holistic correspondence programme, and had introduced a facility for reminders to be sent to Managers regarding complaints within the system that required a response.
- Issues had arisen regarding complaints received directly by email to Officers when they were on leave. It was suggested that this matter would need to be forwarded to IT to see if there were options for retrieval.

It was stated that all complaints regarding the long-term empty premium had been received from those who had to pay the premium due to their properties being left unoccupied and unfurnished for two years or more, and who had not been eligible for statutory exemptions. It was noted that whilst the long-term empty premium may have affected the renovation of long term derelict homes, the Empty Homes Programme was in place to offer assistance to get properties back into use. Members were interested in how the Private Sector Housing team that managed the Empty Homes Programme worked together with the Revenues team who implemented the Long-Term Empty Premium, and whether the homes that are brought back into use effect the Planning departments housing need figures.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Quarter 3 feedback briefing be noted.
2. That the successful implementation of the other MKIP shared services be noted, but due to concerns regarding complaints received

by the Planning Support Shared service, that the Interim Head of Planning Support be invited to circulate a briefing note detailing:

- a. A timeline for the implementation of performance improvement measures depicting when these measures are expected to take effect and improve service;
 - b. The performance indicators that have returned results to date; and
 - c. The financial information detailing budget, spend and the projected savings to be made going forward.
3. That information be circulated to Members to explain how the Private Sector Housing and Council Tax departments work together to administrate the Council tax assistance regarding the return to use of long term empty properties, and whether the return to use of these properties affects the calculation of the housing need target used by the Spatial Policy team.

129. 2014/15 QUARTER 3 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

The Policy and Information Officer, Clare Wood, introduced the Quarter 3 Key Performance Indicator Report and advised the Committee that:

- Income from pay and display car parks had increased by 10% compared to the same period during the previous year, equating to an additional £28.66 income per parking space.
- The number of park and ride on-board transactions had marginally missed the quarterly target, but that the decline in performance had lessened from the previous year.
- During quarter 2 a triage system had been introduced into the housing department to handle homelessness cases meaning that the figures have increased during quarter 3. However based upon the previous year's data and performance the annual target was not expected to be met.
- There was a wide review of street cleansing underway to address areas of land where there was an unacceptable amount of litter.

The following points were made during discussion:

- Members requested data explaining why there had been an increase in income derived from pay and display parking spaces, and the users of the park and ride service. Miss Wood explained that service profiling was used and that details could be circulated to Members.
- The Committee enquired as to how the triage system employed with regard homelessness cases worked in practice, and in particular

requested clarification as to how this helped contribute towards the prevention of homelessness.

- As part of the process of area based street cleaning, the cleansed area is monitored after a lapse of time and pictorial measurements are used to judge the efficacy and this given a numerical value. The Council were unable to remove fly-tipped waste from private land, and Members expressed concern that if not taken it could encourage further tipping or other unwanted behaviours.

RESOLVED:

1. That the following be noted:
 - a. The out-turns of the KPIs;
 - b. The indicators that were unlikely to achieve the annual performance target; and
 - c. That the new monitoring KPI for development Enforcement: DCE 004 Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 21 days be agreed.
2. That the Policy and Information Officer be requested to circulate the performance profiling information for pay and display car parks and the park and ride bus service.
3. That the Programme Manager (Financial Inclusion and Maidstone Families Matter) be requested to provide details as to how the triage system implemented in the Gateway for homelessness enquiries works in practice.
4. That Members concern regarding the leaf detritus in the Bearsted ward area be reported to the Environmental depot, and that details as to the route of the area based cleaning service, and the rationale behind non-removal of flytipping from private land, be circulated by the Operations Manager to Members outside of the Meeting.

130. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman requested that the Committee consider its future work programme, the list of forthcoming decisions, and the SCRAIP update report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's Future Work Programme, the Council's List of Forthcoming Decisions and the SCRAIP update be noted.

131. DURATION OF MEETING

6.32 p.m. to 8.34 p.m.