

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5
FEBRUARY 2013**

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Gooch (Chairman), Yates, English,
Mrs Grigg, Hogg, Pickett and Mrs Stockell

73. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.

It was resolved that all items be web-cast.

74. Apologies.

Councillor Mrs Gibson and Moss sent apologies.

75. Notification of Substitute Members.

There were no Substitute Members.

76. Notification of Visiting Members.

There were no Visiting Members.

77. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

There were no disclosures.

78. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.

It was agreed that all items be taken in public as proposed.

79. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2013.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting on 8 January 2013 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed.

80. Complaints Report Q3 2012-2013

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Hotson, introduced the Quarter 3 Complaints Report. Sam Bailey, Research and Performance Officer informed the Committee on report's main points:

- Complaints had dropped by approximately a third. 102 complaints had been received, compared with 151 the previous quarter;
- 102 stage 1 complaints were received. 98 were responded to on time, an improvement of 3% from previous quarter;
- Waste collection saw a dramatic reduction in complaints; from 31 last quarter to 6 this quarter. This was attributed to the removal of the green sack collection;
- A large number of compliments have been received;
- Two services that received more compliments than complaints were Waste Collection and Customer Services; and
- It was explained that both these services had high levels of contact with the public.

Martin Jeynes, Environmental Enforcement Manager, was invited to update the Committee on the rise in complaints relating to Environmental Enforcement and Litter Enforcement Officers. The service had received 21 complaints this quarter; 16 related to the conduct of Litter Enforcement Officers. Mr Jeynes made the following points:

- The rise in complaints was unexpected and could be attributed to the pressures of Christmas and the economic climate;
- Complaints were rarely to dispute the actual issue of the Fixed Penalty Notice issue which was seen as positive;
- It was often an embarrassing and confrontational situation for the recipient and the only recourse available was to complain or appeal;
- Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) was working with in partnership with the contractors to provide Litter Enforcement Officers with training in customer service and conflict management;
- CCTV recording equipment was used when issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (the Committee was shown the uniform worn by Officers with the CCTV camera attached);
- The person being issued a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) was informed that they would be recorded;
- The CCTV recording was used when complaints were being investigated;
- In cases where the person being fined was violent or provided incorrect contact details, a FPN would not be issued, they would proceed straight to prosecution.
- Of the 300 appeals cases against the issue of the FPN taken to the Magistrates court, only one case had been upheld.

The Committee considered the communication difficulties that could occur between Officers and non-English speakers being issued an FPN which could lead to a complaint. Mr Jeynes informed Members that he was investigating the use of language identification cards, similar to those used by the Police service but this was not felt to be a prevalent issue. The Committee recommended that the officer also investigate the plausibility of a language translation phone service.

John Foster, Regeneration and Economic Development Manager, provided an update on complaints reported during the previous quarter relating to

trips and falls as a result of the new High Street scheme. Mr Foster informed Members that complaints had dramatically decreased this quarter due to the adjustments made to the High Street. The bus stop on King Street had the carriageway replaced with black tarmac which provided a contrast with the pavement. This had reduced the amount of falls on the High Street. The Committee were advised that the Council would continue to monitor the situation.

It was recommended that

- a) The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services investigate the use of a language translation phone service and language identification cards used by the police service to assist Litter Enforcement Officers issuing Fixed Penalty Notices to non-English Speakers and update the Committee on the outcome; and
- b) The Committee keep a watching brief on the impact on complaints of the measures implemented to assist Litter Enforcement Officers issuing Fixed Penalty Notice to non-English speakers in future complaints monitoring reports.

81. Commissioning & Procurement Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Hotson, introduced the report on the Commissioning & Procurement Strategy. He explained that he wanted the Committee's involvement and input in developing a new Commissioning and Procurement Strategy which was in its formative stages. This would replace the Procurement Strategy, established in April 2010. The strategy would focus on:

- Value for money,
- Openness and transparency; and
- Supporting local businesses.

Members were informed that commissioning was part of a bigger picture for procurement. It was undertaken at a pre procurement stage. Services would be reviewed at an early stage on their ability to deliver in an efficient and cost effective manner with the additional the focus of commissioning to reflect the needs of the community and tailoring services to achieve desired outcomes in line with the Council's priorities. The result of which could be to provide services in-house, outsourcing, partnership work or via community groups or decommissioning, if necessary.

The Committee considered the implications of the Social Values Act 2012 which came into force on 31 January 2013 in relation to commissioning. It queried what the Council's process for determining social values would be. The Cabinet Member explained that it was likely to be the focus of a Cabinet away day meeting it would of the input of the Corporate Leadership Team. He told the Committee that it would have the opportunity to review this when the strategy returned to scrutiny at the beginning of the next Municipal Year.

Members were informed that training guidance would be provided on commissioning. The Committee felt that this was important and training and guidance should be provided to Officers and Members, including the Cabinet. It discussed the development of 'commissioning champions', Officers within the authority with the expertise to provide support and guidance to others.

It was recommended that:

- a) It be noted that the Committee supports the proposed commissioning training for Officers and Members, including Cabinet, and advocates the development of commissioning guidance and commissioning champions (Officers able to provide ongoing guidance and expertise to others) within the authority;
- b) An emphasis be placed on Social Values within the Commissioning and Procurement Strategy, following the process of determination described by the Cabinet Member; and
- c) The Commissioning and Procurement Strategy return to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the beginning of the Municipal Year for review.

82. Customer Focused Services.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Hotson, introduced the report on Customer Focused Services. Anna Collier, Efficiency and Improvement Officer and Georgia Hawkes, Head of Business Transformation presented the findings of the Customer Focused Services review. It was explained that during 2012 a review of the way the Council delivers customer services had been undertaken with the purpose of identifying the most appropriate customer service delivery and engagement model.

The project's six work streams were presented to the Committee. These were:

- Who are our customers?
- How do we manage customer data and information?
- What do our customers want?
- What is the optimum customer delivery model?
- How do we engage with customers?
- What is the local, regional and national context?

The review's findings were based on consultation undertaken with residents which included focus groups and included extensive desktop research, visits to other local authorities, the use of mosaic data and interviews with frontline service managers.

The Committee were asked to consider the customer service model presented and whether it fitted the principles for customer service.

Members were encouraged to put forward further other options which had not been identified.

The overarching principle was that “residents and businesses are the starting point for services; every service must be considered from the perspective of the citizen and delivered at the lowest possible level – a bottom-up approach” with the following subsidiaries:

- Enable as many customers as possible to be self sufficient
- Affordable
- Ensure services are accessible to the most vulnerable
- High quality service standards consistently applied
- Sustainable and adaptable for the future

The Committee agreed that the customer services model met its principles. Members suggested the option of outsourcing of the Contact Centre and the use of interactive touch screen information points.

The level of consultation with disability forums and organisations was considered and a member referenced a past scrutiny review: ‘Access to the Council’s Services for Disabled People’. It was felt that this should be revisited by the review team. Members were advised that Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) were carried out for all projects. The Committee recommended that an EIA be carried out in consultation with disability forums for all projects going forward.

Members were informed that the next steps for the project was the development and agreement of draft projects, the Customer Service Improvement Strategy and the set up of programme structure.

It was recommended that:

- a) Equality Impact Assessments are carried out in consultation with disability forums for all future projects delivered via Customer Focused Services;
- b) Consideration be given to the option of outsourcing the Contact Centre;
- c) The Information points with interactive touch screens be investigated as part of the customer services model; and
- d) The Customer Focuser Services Project team revisit the findings of the ‘Access to the Council’s Services for Disabled People’ Overview and Scrutiny Review.

83. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011-12.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011-12.

The Committee was informed that the report was much shorter than previous reports following Member’s recommendations. Members felt that the review of the previous year showed a lack of outcomes for scrutiny. However it was concluded that the recent Governance Review had

identified the issues affecting scrutiny and the function and outcomes would be improved as a result.

It was recommended that the Annual Report be approved, subject to the inclusion of the Chairman's introductions.

84. Future Work Programme.

The Committee considered its future work programme and the list of forthcoming decisions.

Members were informed that the Capital Programme Working Programme would be meeting on Monday 18 February at 1.30 p.m. to consider Land Allocation with the assistance of an expert witness.

It was recommended that:

- a) The date of the next Capital Programme Working Group meeting be noted by all Members of the Committee; and
- b) The Future Work Programme be noted.

85. Duration of Meeting

6.30 p.m. to 9.45 p.m.