

## Review Committee – 5 January 2016

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **5 January 2016** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J H Gibson

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher  
Cllr J D Griffin  
Cllr J Hayter  
Cllr B T Hazlewood  
Cllr M Hoy  
Cllr J L Lawmon

Cllr Mrs C M Mason  
Cllr J R F Mason  
Cllr Mrs C A Pavelin  
Cllr Mrs M H Spencer  
Cllr M J Webb

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllr Mrs C E Roe (Portfolio Holder for Governance) and Cllr M Maddocks.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R R Dray, G J Ioannou and D J Sperring.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

A Mowbray - Assistant Director - Transformational Services  
D Tribe - Assistant Director - Customer, Revenues & Benefits Services  
P Gowers - Overview and Scrutiny Officer  
M Power - Committee Administrator

### **1 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **2 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK UPDATE**

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director - Customer, Revenues & Benefits Services following a review of the Customer Feedback process.

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:-

- The specific details of complaints would not be shown on the quarterly reports to the Executive; full details of a complaint and complainant are provided to the officer assigned to deal with the complaint. The severity of the complaint will dictate which officer will deal with it. The report to the Executive shows the number of complaints as a percentage of the total feedback received.

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- All complaints are seen by the appropriate Assistant Director and the more serious complaints will be brought to the attention of the Portfolio Holder.
- Complaints received in the informal stage of the process are logged on to the system as a service request. This information will be available as part of the monitoring of the Council's larger contracts and complaints will be reviewed in conjunction with contractor. Complaints received in respect of a contract service agreement will be escalated if this is appropriate.
- Information was requested on the number of complaints received in the informal stage, by category/contract during a specified period; for example, over the course of one month/three months. This would provide the Committee with the information it will need, should it be decided to review areas of the customer feedback process in the future.
- All complaints received by the Council are recorded on to one of its computerised systems. Staff involved in the processes have a full understanding of what a complaint is and how to deal with it; all staff are aware that complaints received must be logged.
- In response to the decision not to implement a system where a complainant is contacted for feedback following completion of a complaint, it was suggested that feedback could be requested at the same time as the complainant is advised of the outcome of the complaint. The Assistant Director agreed that follow-up sampling of a percentage of customers could be undertaken by the Council's Customer Services team to monitor that complaints had been resolved satisfactorily. It was noted that at the time of being notified of the outcome of the complaint, the complainant is advised of the option of pursuing the matter further with the Local Government Ombudsman.
- In response to a Member comment relating to the Council dealing with issues 'within a reasonable timescale', the Assistant Director advised that the timescale will depend on the nature of the complaint but that complainants are kept apprised of progress at every stage of the process, including how long it is likely to take to resolve the complaint.
- Although Members do not have access to detailed information on complaints, each Member receives a copy of the quarterly report to the Executive, which details results and performance and lists complaints statistics. Members stated that it would be useful to see evidence of trends of complaints, especially in the current climate where services are being reduced due to financial constraints. The report into the Executive shows some of these trends.
- When an informal complaint is received it is logged on to the appropriate service area system and given a reference number: this ensures that easily resolved issues, such as missed bins, are picked up immediately

and then completed through the back office system using a work flow process. A Stage 2 complaint is logged on to the formal system and is dealt with by the Leadership Support Team (LST), which monitors the complaint and escalates as appropriate.

- In respect of service level agreement complaints, in the first instance, the contractor is given the opportunity to address the complaint. If this is not done adequately, the complaint will be automatically escalated through the process. If there are a number of complaints around a particular service, the LST will flag this up with the appropriate service area and it will also be included as part of the reporting process. Figures would need to be extracted from the system to establish a pattern of complaints.
- If Customer Services receives a complaint that can be resolved by them, they will take ownership of the complaint and follow it through to resolution. When Customer Services does not have the technical knowledge to deal with a complaint, the complaint will be passed to the LST as a formal complaint. The LST will then pass the complaint to the appropriate officer to deal with and ensure that it is monitored and completed to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- Different services within the Council often have different IT systems, which perform specific functions relating to that service. So, although formal complaints are logged centrally, there is no one single IT system on which informal complaints are logged.
- Council staff have a positive attitude to receiving both negative and positive feedback; they see the opportunity to learn from this feedback so that the issue doesn't arise in future.
- The Council recognises the value of positive feedback for staff; compliments received are fed back to staff via the Assistant Director/Manager and put on the staff Intranet, as well as being included in the quarterly report to the Executive. There was a suggestion that formal recognition of individual staff members who have worked exceptionally well would be beneficial.
- The suggestion that the name of the form could be changed from 'Comments, Compliments and Complaints' to 'Customer Feedback' could be considered.

### Resolved

- (1) That the changes made to the Customer Feedback process be noted.
- (2) That information be provided on the number of complaints received in the informal stage, by category/contract, on a sample of service areas during a specified period, for example over the course of one month/three months.

### 3 REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ICT CONTRACT – UPDATE

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Transformational Services on the possible budget savings relating to the third party software contracts, identified in last year's ICT contract review.

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:-

- Members were pleased to note that savings of 9.7% on third-party support of software costs had been achieved in 2015/16 (compared with 2014/15). The Assistant Director – Transformational Services advised that it was hoped that the proposed new ICT contract would provide opportunity for additional savings in the forthcoming year. (It was noted that the budget is for third party support of hardware as well as software.) Although a review could ascertain whether the number of systems in use in the Council could be reduced and consolidated, it was recognised that this may be difficult as there are few suppliers of specialised software for particular Local Government functions.
- It was anticipated that in the future it may be possible that the need for certain software, such as virus software and email archiving, could be discontinued as they will be included in the new contract ICT arrangements, thus providing an annual cost saving for these elements.
- The option for the new ICT contract that is being explored envisages that a substantial part of the third party software will reside on virtual servers in 'the cloud' rather than on physical servers, leading to corresponding savings.
- Support of third party contracts is included as part of the main ICT contract and there is a charge made by the contractor for each supported system on the Council's servers. This will be considered during contract negotiations for the new ICT contract arrangements. Support charges do not apply in respect of those systems where a fully hosted service is offered, such as the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) that the Council uses currently. With a fully hosted service the Council has no involvement at all in supporting either software or hardware, but has only to log in to the system to use the service. It was noted, however, that the cost of a hosted service for some systems can be prohibitive.

Although ideally the Council would have Consumer Price Index (CPI) than Retail Price Index (RPI) written into third party contracts, this can sometimes be too costly to change in current contracts in terms of officer time, especially for the very small contracts. This issue doesn't apply to the Council's fixed term contracts.

### Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the Review Committee looks at the situation again in the new Municipal Year to see if it has been possible to reduce the third party costs by a further 10%.

### 4 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

Members reviewed the Key Decisions document and noted its contents.

### 5 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered and approved its Work Plan.

Members were asked to email the Overview and Scrutiny officer with any suggestions they had for future reviews.

In respect of planning enforcement, the Committee's Planning Enforcement project team met in December with the newly appointed Assistant Director - Planning Services and have a second meeting scheduled for February. The Assistant Director would be bringing the new Planning Enforcement plan to the Review Committee meeting on 1 March. Notes of the December project team meeting would be forwarded to all Members of the Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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