

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee of Broadland District Council, held on Monday 17 October 2022 at 6pm at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Thomas (Chairman), S Beadle (sub for Roper), P Bulman, S Catchpole, K Kelly, I Mackie, M Murrell and G Nurden

Cabinet Members Present: Councillors: J Emsell and J Leggett

Officers in Attendance: The Director Place, the Assistant Director ICT/Digital and Transformation, the Food Safety and Licensing Team Manager and the Democratic Services Officer (DM).

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs: S Holland, S Prutton and D Roper.

10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Minute no: 4 – Collaboration Work Group

Members asked for progress on the Committee's decision to "*defer consideration of the report of the Collaboration Working Group and to request members of the Working Group meet and arrange a meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader and report back to the Committee*". The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development advised the Committee that the meeting had taken place but as yet nothing had been decided with

regard to the next course of action. Members were keen to hear further on this matter and it was

RESOLVED that a further report be made to the next meeting of the Committee on progress with the Collaboration Working Group report and that members of the Working Group be invited to attend the meeting.

11 FIRST CLASS CUSTOMER SERVICE – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PHASE ONE

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation which set out a proposal for initiating a discovery exercise to identify and map out the current end-to-end customer journeys and the associated customer experience at each touchpoint and interaction with the two Councils.

The Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation pointed out that the recommendations in the report needed to be changed to recommend the proposals to Cabinet. She reminded members that Cabinet had already agreed to earmark £49,500 towards the development of the business case for Customer Relations Management and the report was seeking authority from Cabinet to use these earmarked reserves for the Council's contribution to the £110k cost of the discovery phase. The discovery phase was necessary to fully understand the benefits of customer relations management, and the proposal would involve the engagement of expert consultants to help with this. The ICT and Digital Strategy set out the need to improve and transform the Council's offer through innovative use of technology with a focus on first class customer service and a reduction in the cost of end-to-end service delivery whilst enabling customers to interact in a more efficient way – at a time that suits them using a channel of their choice and automated services when appropriate. The Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation then highlighted the potential benefits in terms of cost and efficiency savings.

Discussion then took place with the Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation answering questions from members. She confirmed that the total cost of the proposed discovery phase was £110k across the two councils with Broadland's share of the cost being £49,500. It was suggested and agreed that the second recommendation in the report be amended to more accurately reflect this. She also confirmed that the discovery work undertaken would be a hybrid of internal officer resource working together with consultants with experience in this field in local government.

A number of concerns were raised and comments made about the existing telephone service and difficulties in accessing officers via the telephone. It was feared that some customers were being forced to find alternative means of contacting officers which was not their preferred method of contact as they could not get through on a telephone. . Some members gave examples of these difficulties including those experienced recently by a parish clerk. The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development reported

that the issues experienced by the parish clerk had been raised and was being looked at and the issue of contacting officers would be discussed at the forthcoming Parish/Town Council forum. Members were encouraged to raise any specific areas of concern with officers at the time so that these could be addressed.

Members were keen to ensure that other options for contacting the Council in addition to accessing the website were retained.

The Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation responded to concerns pointing out that the discovery phase would help to identify and understand customer preferences and needs and help target services where needed most. The telephony system was one channel of contact with the Council and was currently the most frequently used channel. Development of an enhanced on line experience could provide a better alternative option for some customers. More was known about the use of the telephone system now than ever before with data not previously available now being collected. Demand had increased and consideration needed to be given to how to respond to the increase in demand. It was possible that many callers could find what they needed on line at a time to suit them.

In response to a question as to where key performance indicators would be detailed to ensure a measure existed by which the customer experience could be monitored, the Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation explained that the deliverables would be fully outlined in the business case including strategic measurements, savings and cost benefit analysis. With regard to operational indicators, details of volume and demand would be available but key performance indicators would not form part of the business case – this would be a separate piece of work. Operational data was reviewed by the Corporate Management Leadership Team on a weekly basis and quarterly performance data was available to members as part of the quarterly performance reports. Managers had a live link to telephone data to facilitate management of resources according to demand. A concern was raised that it was difficult to actually understand current performance as no baseline data was available to monitor future performance. The transformation agenda made it very difficult to undertake performance monitoring due to the lack of comparable data. The Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation responded that the discovery project being proposed would establish the baseline data and form part of the transformation programme to track benefits realised.

A comment was made that there was a need to have regard to the quality of the service and not just a focus on costs and savings.

There was still some concern that the digitalisation of services would result in the loss of the personal touch and would not suit the needs of some residents who preferred a more personal approach. The Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation reiterated that the aim was to see the right service provided at the right time by the right method. Shifting 80% of demand to an online solution would enable focus to be given to the channels needed to serve the remaining 20%.

In response to questions about the indicative timescales for the delivery of a fully costed business case, the Assistant Director of ICT/Digital and Transformation confirmed she was satisfied with the lead in times and the proposal to submit a full business case to Cabinet in Quarter 4 was realistic.

.RESOLVED to recommend Cabinet to

1. agree to initiate the discovery phase as the first phase towards establishing the current state, the future state and the underpinning technology to inform a fully- costed business case for investment to deliver a First-Class Customer Service.
2. utilise the Broadland District Council's contribution of £49,500 from Earmarked Reserves agreed by Cabinet on 8 February 2022 on consultancy resource to support in the development of a full outline business case.

12 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting because otherwise, information which is exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, would be disclosed to them.

13 LICENSING SERVICE REVIEW

Members considered the exempt report of the Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager setting out findings of a Licensing service review and proposals for changes to the service structure and capacity, in order to ensure the Council had a robust and sustainable Licensing service which could deliver with assurance against the service aims and the licensing objectives.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager took members through the report in detail emphasising that the proposals would add no additional growth the base revenue budget as the funding of the proposed structure would be met from licensing fee income. Workloads had increased in the service and remained at a high level, with team resources at a low level when benchmarked with similar neighbouring authorities. This was currently being managed by way of temporary agency staff which was expensive. There was a limited professional licensing workforce available and the Council was keen to continue to train and develop its own licensing professionals. The new structure would support this and maximise staff retention. A recent Internal Audit of the service identified capacity as a key risk with the potential risk of

loss of institutional knowledge. There would be difficulty replacing staff and delivering statutory work or resuming proactive work.

If approved, the resources senior officer structure would enable additional licensing activities to be undertaken to enhance the protection offered to communities, including development of policies for sexual entertainment licensing in the event of such an application being received.

The Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager then answered questions from members. He explained the reasoning for the proposed allocations on the pay grades of the revised posts and confirmed he was satisfied the timeframes set out in the report for Cabinet authorisation, consultation and implementation were achievable to be effective from 1 April 2023.

In response to a question about apprenticeships, the Food, Safety and Licensing Team Manager confirmed that there were already apprentices within the wider team and that other opportunities to extend this were being explored. He also confirmed that costings for outsourcing the service had not been explored as this was not considered a viable option given the shortage of professional licensing services.

RESOLVED to recommend Cabinet

to agree the Licensing Service Review proposals detailed in the report (at paragraph 4.2 and Appendix 2), to be implemented with effect from 1st April 2023, both for team structure and an increase in establishment of Licensing service staffing to 6.04 FTE (full time equivalent) officer provision, plus 0.6 FTE (1-year temporary staffing).

(The meeting concluded at 7.20pm)

Chairman