

Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Committee

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Committee of South Norfolk Council held on Wednesday 28 April 2021 at 2.00pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: C Hudson (Chairman), D Burrill, F Curson, B Duffin, T Holden, W Kemp, T Laidlaw, J Overton and T Spruce.

Cabinet Member Present: Councillor: R Elliott

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) (E Hodds), the Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Assistant Director of Communities (S Phelan), the Strategy and Programme Manager (S Carey) the Programme Manager (A Mewes) and the Leisure and Business Development Manager (M Heazel)

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Committee, held on Wednesday 30 January 2020 were approved as a correct record.

14 MEMBERS IT UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) updated members on the progress made on the Members IT project. All members were currently being moved onto the Office 365 platform, which was progressing well. Members noted that there had been a few issues at the

start of the process, but they were quickly rectified. Most councillors had replied to the survey regarding the changeover and, some members were in the process of booking in to update their devices and new email addresses. The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) encouraged any members who had not completed the survey to complete it as soon as possible. She further explained that the training needed to be undertaken within a certain period. The Committee was informed that once the Members from both Councils had moved over to Office 365, work would start on staff migration.

A further update was given regarding the rollout of the Committee software system, which had been delayed due to workloads that had arisen from the forthcoming Election. The Business Case was yet to be finalised needed finalising, but money had been set out in the budget for the project and it was expected to be developed over the summer months.

The Chairman emphasised the need for the remaining members to complete the survey for the Office 365 migration at the earliest opportunity to help progress the project. The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) for the update.

15 SPARK TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members considered the report from the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) and the Chief of Staff, which provided an update on the projects processed under the SPARK Transformation Programme.

The Committee was asked to note the positive progress made across the SPARK Transformation Programme and the following areas were highlighted:

Joint Email

As noted above the Office 365 migration was currently in place for a May to November rollout, but officers were hopeful for completion before the end target. The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) explained that the red indicator on the project was due to a vacancy within the team. The Committee noted that 90% of the Council's software applications had passed the first test when being migrated to Office 365 with more work being carried out with the applications which had failed.

Domain migration

This project worked alongside the Joint Email and Website projects. It was noted that work was looking into the systems which used the s-norfolk/South Norfolk domain name to complete the migration had started. The Committee was informed that a 12-month timeframe was allocated for the project, with priority systems at the top of the list.

One Network

The One Team Network had been signed and, officers were now working through the implementation of the new network. Once completed the new network would provide a baseline to improve the back-office systems throughout the Council.

Strategic approach to systems transformation

An external company called Methods was being used to evaluate the best approach to upgrading systems alongside joining up the existing systems from both Councils. A report was being finalised by the management team and would form a part of the Council's IT Strategy.

Business Intelligence (BI) and Governance

This project was investigating the Council's Business framework and was now looking at how the Council could utilise data to create an intelligence led culture of continuous improvement. The Committee noted an amber indicator on the project which referred to the ongoing challenge surrounding the IT team resource to support the project.

New ways of Working (NWOW) Programme

Key developments of the programme, included the reopening of the Council buildings to customers on the 12 April 2021 and the future accommodation project.

Customer Satisfaction/Experience and Complaints Approach

Members were updated on work carried out to develop a new Customer Strategy and the Complaints Approach across the two Councils. The Chief of Staff informed members that draft forms of the Customer Strategy and Charter had been created. A pilot survey also launched on the Council's Websites which would collate customer feedback. Members noted that work on a draft Complaint Policy to review the Council's approach had started also. A full report on this was scheduled to come before the Committee at the next meeting.

Organisational Development

The Management and Leadership programme had commenced and the Assistant Director for Governance and Business Support (Monitoring Officer) and members of the HR Team had completed the Myers-Briggs training, which would shortly be rolled out across the whole organisation. The Committee also noted that the Council had found a preferred trainer for the corporate rollout with sessions already starting with management teams. Work would be undertaken to integrate further training for members in due course.

Broadland Waste Procurement of Waste Contract/ Review of Councils' Depots

Attention was drawn to the review of the Ketteringham depot which was no longer fit for purpose and work had started regarding the costing for a new depot. It was noted that a new site would be needed as opposed to renovation works, due to the current site's lack of capacity.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Council's vehicles were equipped with CCTV where staff could press a button which would relay a photo back to the Customer Services Team if a bin was not put out and therefore missed.

Best in Class Housing Programme

The Committee was provided with an update on the Best in Class Housing Programme which went live a few weeks ago and was progressing well.

After further discussion the Chairman thanked officers for the report which was noted by the Committee. He also highlighted the work which the Chief of Staff had carried out for the Committee over the last nine months and wished her the best with her new role as Head of Strategy at the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It was then;

RESOLVED:

To note the content of the report with regards to the progress made with the programme.

16 JOINT WEBSITE PROJECT UPDATE

The Programme Manager advised Members of the progress relating to the joint website project.

Members noted the key design elements laid out in the report, detailing the work involved in maintaining the two Council's identities whilst providing a singular platform to focus resources and develop functionality to benefit customers. The Programme Manager advised the Committee that the joint domain name would be used for the Website as previously agreed by the Councils.

Discussion turned to the three strands of development for the Website. Members noted the first strand focused on the work that the supplier JADU had done in developing templates for officers' use. The second strand covered the content editors within individual services areas, with over 50 officers trained to move and review content from the existing Websites. The third stand involved the IT and Digital Team whose role was to provide functionality for the Website.

In response to a query about the colour scheme for the Joint Website, it was confirmed that following several informal sessions with members from both Councils a blue colour scheme had been the preferred choice.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Focus noted the increasing rate at which the Council's residents access information on their mobile phones and asked officers if it would be possible for members to interact with a test version on their devices. The Chief of Staff confirmed that a range of testing was in place for both desktop and mobile formats of the Website and that as the project moved along, the functionality of the different devices would continue to be monitored and tested.

In response to a query Members were advised that there was no plan to have a beta version of the new Website before the go-live date, but a test version of the site was available to officers to review.

A concern was raised regarding the Leisure Team's request for a different structure for their content and whether this would affect the overall target of a June go-live date. However, members were advised that the timescales for both projects were running alongside each other and would not impact the main Website.

Clarification was sought over the increasing replacement of pictures with text seen in many Local Government Websites. It was noted that the content editors did have access to add graphics although it would need to be in line with accessibility criteria. The Chairman noted the officer's comments adding that there needed to be a balance to engage and informed the person viewing the site.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and referred members of the Committee to the recommendation where it was then;

RESOLVED:

To note the progress with the website project so far.

17 LEISURE SERVICES RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

Officers took members through the report providing information on the recovery plan for the Council's Leisure Service from spring 2021. The update was brought before the Committee for comments before a full plan was devised. The Plan would return to the Committee and moved onto Cabinet after.

The Committee was informed of the short and long-term drivers for recovery after restrictions had lifted. The short-term drivers included; marketing campaigns, targeting new/old members to address Covid-19 concerns, growing and diversifying the online offers and looking into the market

demands. The Assistant Director for Communities explained that the short-term drivers would feed into the longer-term drivers of the Leisure Recovery plan and a New Leisure Strategy.

Members noted that the Leisure Service was facing an unprecedented situation following the closure due to COVID-19. Members were reassured that officers had been working hard to make the facilities as safe as possible, whilst encouraging the strongest possible recovery.

In response to a member's question about turning Leisure Services into a local authority trading company, Officers explained that there was no intention to go down this course however they were looking into introducing an Advisory Board structure, which would offer critical challenge on the recovery plans and reduce the level of subsidy required from the Council. Officers confirmed South Norfolk Council would retain 100% ownership of the Leisure Service. It was noted that the Council's position was stronger than others who had outsourced the services as the Council had been able to access Government funding for lost income over the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to the Chairman's question around business intelligence regarding the position of private providers, it was noted that it was too early to gauge the position of the market. Officers explained that larger companies were utilising pricing campaigns after the restrictions had lifted. It was further explained that the Leisure Service the Council offered to its residents was difficult to compare with the bigger companies. An officer explained the three-year commitment made by Cabinet has helped the service develop and move forward in a strong position.

In response to a query regarding workplace safety for members of staff, Officers explained that workplace testing was being rolled out across sites to which staff had access, which were fully compliant with Government guidance.

In respect of the Framlingham Earl Leisure Centre reopening, it was noted that local schools continued to use the centre in the daytime. Officers explained that currently, only junior indoor groups could operate within the current restrictions. This had led to the site being open for four days a week, when restrictions lifted further on 17 May 2021 the centre would revert to normal opening hours. Officers explained that work had also begun looking into the protentional expansion of the centre with feasibility studies being drawn up.

A Member suggested a small amendment to the first recommendation where it was agreed by officers and the Committee to amend the wording to read 'ensuring that the facilities were able to reopen in a Covid secure manner'.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and work which had been carried out in reopening the Leisure Centres for residents, highlighting the importance of encouraging people to get as fit as possible. It was then;

RESOLVED:

to

1. Note the efforts made by officers in ensuring that the facilities were able to reopen in a Covid secure manner at the various points on the Government's roadmap out of lockdown.
2. Note the financial projections for the service based on the participation, membership recovery and second closure.
3. Note the various workstreams outline by officers in their presentation.

(The meeting concluded at 3.35pm)

Chairman