

Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Service Improvement & Efficiency Committee** held via video link on **Monday 11 January 2021** at **6pm** when there were present:

Cllr J L Thomas – Chairman

Cllr P E Bulman

Cllr S I Holland

Cllr G K Nurden

Cllr S J Catchpole

Cllr D King

Cllr S M Prutton

Cllr J J Emsell

Cllr M L Murrell

Cllr D Roper

Cllr N Brennan and Cllr K Kelly also attended the meeting for its duration

Also in attendance were the Director of Resources (DL), the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support (EH), the Chief of Staff (HR), the ICT and Digital Manager (CB), the Internal Consultancy Lead for Governance (NT) and the Democratic Services Officers (JH & LA).

13 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr I J Mackie.

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

15 SPARK TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chief of Staff and Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support presented the report which provided Members with an update on the major transformation SPARK projects.

Joint Website

Members were informed of the progress regarding the joint website project, and the Chief of Staff advised that the final website design had been agreed and a prototype produced by Jadu. Once functionality testing was completed, Members would be invited to Member engagement sessions. The Chief of Staff further advised that service areas continued to develop content for the new website.

Joint Email

Members were informed that trial migration work continued with testing carried out to look at the impact of linking with Officer 365. Members were further advised that initial testing on application users was carried out with a plan to start migrating users from April 2021. Officers explained that an all Member briefing was scheduled to take place in the next two to three weeks, to provide Members with more information, and would include details of training to be provided. Officers assured Members that current issues with resources would not impact on the delivery due date.

One Network

Officers advised Members that the project had gone out to tender, with officers evaluating the three responses received. Once a quality assurance review of scoring and due diligence had been undertaken, recommendations would be taken to Cabinet for decision on the contract award.

System Transformation

Members were advised that stakeholder meetings had been carried out in early December 2020, to set out a strategic review of system alignment. Workshops would be held with all officers who used the systems, which would set out the Council's strategy and approach to system change and implementation over the next three years.

Business Intelligence and Governance

Members were advised that this project was still in the scoping phase, where service leads were looking at how to utilise data and current systems to improve service areas.

New Ways of Working

Officers advised Members on the progress of scoping work which looked at staff returns to the office and service area placements across the two sites during and post Covid.

Customer Satisfaction/Experience

Members were updated on work carried out to develop a new customer strategy across both Councils, utilising customers' insights and feedback to improve the Councils' services. Members were advised of a new customer service charter currently in development, which would be reviewed by Members.

Complaint Handling

Members were informed that a new project had been added to the programme which looked at both informal customer feedback or comments and the Council's formal complaints process. During the discussion, one Member suggested that officers looked at utilising social media as a channel for customer complaints. In response to queries regarding whether complaints were vetted to stop inappropriate complaints progressing through the complaints process, the Chief of Staff confirmed that there was a process in place to ensure genuine complaints were placed to the relevant areas, and inappropriate or vexatious complaints were dealt with appropriately via a separate channel.

Resources Hub

Members were provided with an update on the organisational development projects, Broadland Waste Procurement project, and the Best in Class Housing Programme.

In response to queries raised regarding the set of principles outlined at page 11 of the report, officers advised that the set of principles were agreed in 2018 as part of the feasibility study and could not be amended by the Committee. They clarified that they had been included in the report, to show the set of principles officers followed as part of the SPARK transformation projects.

Concerns were raised by Members with regard to the staffing levels of certain service areas and that savings should not become dependent on the reduction of staff. The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support advised the Committee that there had been no changes to staffing structures and that any staff shortages were due to the natural turnover of staff or the redeployment of staff to cover Covid response work. She further reassured Members that the Council was committed to retaining and developing current staff.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report which was noted by the Committee.

16 PROJECT UPDATE – TELEPHONY

The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support presented her report, which included an update on the installation of soft phones across the Council, the introduction of hunt groups across service areas, call filtering from Customer Services, additional training provided to officers, the introduction of phone champions, and the reduction on the abandoned call rates.

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Members discussed the abandoned call rates of services such as Council Tax and queried staff capacity. In response, the Director of Resources advised that initial calls to the team were taken by an outside company and that there had been issues with calls transferring back to office staff. Regarding staff capacity, she explained that only a proportion of staff were answering calls with the remainder of staff performing other duties. The abandon rate data had been used to pinpoint busier call periods, where more officers were required to handle calls, therefore creating a more reactive service.

In response to a query as to why planning abandon call rates were not included in the report, officers advised that at the time the data was collected, the planning team did not use the new telephony system to process calls. Officers confirmed that the planning team was now using the new telephony system.

Members requested clarification on when a call was considered abandoned, and in response, the Internal Consultancy Lead for Governance advised that if the customer in the queue ended the call before the service team answered, the call was deemed abandoned. Members noted that this included callers in a queue, after they had been transferred from customer services.

The Chairman thanked officers for the update and Members noted the report.

17 MEMBER IT UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support presented her report, which provided Members with an update on Member ICT. She thanked all those Members who had completed the survey and/or attended one of the drop-in sessions, which had considered the ICT needed to allow Members to fulfil their role.

Members were informed that the migration to Office 365 would replace Members' current blackberry software and that training and supplementary guides would be provided.

With regard to Members' access to committee agendas, officers advised that in the long term it was planned to deliver agendas remotely through a committee management system, and in the short term they would continue to receive paper copies of agendas whilst meetings were held remotely.

Discussion turned to the use of a device which could turn a television screen or monitor into a second screen for Members' iPads. The ICT and Digital Manager explained how this device worked and advised that his team was currently trialling the software to determine its effectiveness.

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Members raised concerns regarding connectivity issues when joining remote meetings as some Members lived in areas with poor broadband coverage. Officers advised that all Members were provided with a 4G sim card alongside their iPad to be used to access the internet when there was no internet available.

Members then thanked the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support for her report which was noted.

The meeting closed at 7.12pm.