

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee of Broadland District Council, held on Monday 25 October 2021 at 6.00pm at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: J Thomas (Chairman), G Nurden (Vice-Chairman), S Beadle, P Bulman, S Catchpole, S Clancy, S Holland, K Kelly and S Prutton.

Cabinet Member Present: Councillor: J Emsell.

Other Member in Attendance: Councillor: K Leggett

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Resources, the Assistant Director of IT / Digital and Transformation, the Strategy and Programmes Manager, the Governance Manager and the Democratic Services Officer (JO).

36 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Roper.

37 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee held on 24 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

38 SPARK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Assistant Director IT/Digital and Transformation introduced the report, which provided an update on the major projects that were currently being progressed as part of the SPARK Transformation Programme.

Key areas highlighted in the report were:

Joint Email

The successful migration of South Norfolk email addresses to the new domain (southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk) had taken place in early October. The migration of Broadland email addresses to the new domain would take place over 6-7 November 2021.

One Network

The development of a single IT infrastructure network across both Councils had been impacted by a global shortage of computer components and as a result delivery of the project had been pushed back from September 2021 to the end of January 2022. Ancillary work continued to progress in anticipation of the arrival of the components.

Systems Transformation

A business case for the award of a contract for a uniform planning system would be taken to the 23 November 2021 meeting of Cabinet, with an implementation date of April 2022. A project manager had been appointed to oversee the implementation of the new finance system. Staff training for the new system had already commenced ahead of the 1 April 2022 rollout.

In response to a query about difficulties in submitting members' expenses claims, the Director of Resources advised the meeting that the Council was in the process of moving from iTrent to the Oracle system managed by Suffolk County Council. In the interim members had been requested to submit their claims by sending them to the Democratic Services Team. It was anticipated that they would be able to enter their claims directly via the new Oracle system shortly. The matter of any recompense from iTrent for the problems with their system would be raised with the Chief of Staff following the meeting.

In answer to a question about moving towards a first class customer service members were advised that a Customer Insight and Engagement Lead had been appointed and was working on establishing a Customer Panel to gain insights into how to better develop the Council's customer services. A Customer Satisfaction Survey had also been launched on the new website on 1 October 2021 to assess how well the Council was delivering against its service delivery commitments. One of the first tasks of the Customer Insight and Engagement Lead would be to establish a clear performance framework for customer satisfaction upon which the delivery of services could be

measured. A paper on this would be taken to the June 2022 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allow the Customer Insight and Engagement Lead time to put the processes in place.

It was also confirmed that Key Performance Indicators would be used to measure customer satisfaction and that these would be built into the performance framework, which was considered on a regular basis by Cabinet. The newly aligned complaints system would also form part of this reporting process.

In answer to a query from the Chairman the meeting was advised that initially customer satisfaction was being recorded through responses on the website. Work was currently being undertaken on producing a standardised process for recording customer satisfaction through other means of communication such as in person, by telephone and in writing.

A member noted that there was a whole cohort of residents that did not have access to the internet, many of whom were also vulnerable. He emphasised that it was vital that these people did not fall through the system through a lack of other means of communicating with the Council.

A member reminded the meeting that the Managing Director had confirmed that he would update Council at its next meeting on proposals to resolve difficulties contacting officers by telephone. The Director of Resources confirmed that work in improving all areas of communication was ongoing. More Reception staff had been recruited at both offices, issues with telephone hunt groups had been resolved and additional training had been provided. Monitoring had taken place and a marked improvement in telephone responses had been identified, with less than two percent failing to be answered last week. It was also being ensured that front line staff from all departments were available to take calls when they came through Reception. The Director of Resources asked that if any members had any specific issues regarding contacting the Council they speak to her about it after the meeting.

A member noted that the Council's telephone responses had improved significantly. However, he also noted that the South Norfolk telephone options message was superior to the Broadland one and asked that they be aligned. The Director of Resources confirmed that the message would be updated as soon as possible.

A member advised the meeting that the Wellbeing Panel had requested that an article be placed in the spring 2022 edition of *Broadland News* to identify residents who wanted to contact the Council without the use of the internet.

AGREED

To note the content of the report with regards to the progress made with the programme and that attention be drawn to the issues that the Committee had raised above.

39 UPDATE ON MEMBER IT

The Assistant Director IT/Digital and Transformation introduced the report, which provided the Committee with an update on the progress to date with the Member IT project, as well as the outcomes from the recent survey. The report also included information about a new electronic committee system and the plan for trialling options for member IT ahead of the May 2023 elections.

Members were reminded that Cabinet had approved the Committee's recommendation to retain the current provision of iPads until the May 2023 elections. Other initiatives included moving over to the new email address, as well as installing the Microsoft Office365 suite of software.

During the summer a survey of members was conducted to understand their use of iPads and to identify if any issues remained. Unfortunately only 11 responses were received. In general, the iPads were seen as satisfactory although some further training was requested.

Members were asked to note that Cabinet had agreed that a trial would commence in spring 2022 to look at the best option that could be adopted from May 2023 and that the new electronic committee system, to be discussed later on today's agenda, would bring further benefits for Members.

In answer to a query about member's hardware post 2023, the Committee was informed that all options would be looked at.

In response to a query about hybrid meetings the Governance Manager advised the Committee that these would be difficult to conduct with the current equipment available and would also be very resource intensive. Moreover, current legislation would not allow members to vote remotely.

One member noted that Internal Drainage Boards held hybrid meetings and that the Council should seek to do the same. He suggested that a Time and Task Panel should look into this matter, but his suggestion was not supported by other members.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Organisational Development acknowledged that some members found IT difficult, but he emphasised that

members must try to be forward looking and that he found it frustrating that only 11 out of 47 members responded to the survey. He suggested that if members wanted their IT to be improved they had a duty to respond when officers requested their input.

In summarising the debate the Chairman noted that IT could be frustrating for many members, but that the response rate to the survey had been poor.

Following a show of hands with eight in favour and one abstention it was:

AGREED

To accept the report on current IT provision for members, subject to the comments above, and note the plans for the trial period.

40 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman advised members that an additional meeting had been arranged for 12 November 2021 at South Norfolk House for consideration of the Accommodation Review.

The meeting would be preceded by an informal joint meeting with South Norfolk's Commercial, Trading and Customer Focus Committee, commencing at 10.30am where members would receive a presentation from the consultants.

The Director of Resources advised the Committee that a meeting of the Joint Member Working Group would be held on Tuesday 2 November 2021 and that this would inform the covering report that would be published on the Committee's agenda on 4 November 2021. Members were also reminded that all of the papers from previous meetings of the Joint Member Working Group were available on SharePoint.

A member suggested that making an informed decision on such an important matter would not be possible immediately after hearing a joint presentation.

In response, the Director of Resources reassured members that they would be fully apprised of all of the issues to be considered in the reports ahead of the meeting. The consultant's report would include the additional information, as requested by the Joint Member Working Group at its meeting on 23 September 2021, whilst the covering report would include any further comments and proposals from the Working Group at its meeting on 2 November 2021.

Members were informed that the reports for the 12 November 2021 meeting of the Committee would be available for circulation by 5 November 2021.

It was noted that some members had visited the Horizon business centre today and that all members had been invited to tour the building. If this invitation had been missed a further visit could be arranged, although numbers were limited by Aviva due to Covid-19 restrictions. A negative lateral flow test would also be required before admittance to the property. Members should contact the Director of Resources if they wished to visit the building.

41 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business 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.

42 COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Governance Manager introduced the exempt report, which updated the Committee on the business case for an electronic committee system and asked members to note the award of the contract.

Members were advised that a business need had been identified for a committee management system, which would enable more efficient working and better use of technology by streamlining processes for managing committees and publishing governance information on the website.

The Committee was informed that most councils used a committee management system and that Broadland and South Norfolk were the only local authorities in Norfolk to not use this software.

Benefits of a committee management system included:

- Streamlining processes for setting up meetings, creating agendas, decisions and minutes.
- Full integration with the Council's current website.

- Better management of members' information, including the register of members' interests, declarations of interests at meetings, gifts and hospitality, training records and attendance.
- Electronic distribution of documents to members' devices via dedicated apps, providing a more agile way of working.

Two committee management systems were on the market. Both had been evaluated and based on the findings a preferred option had been identified. As the value of the contract was below £50,000 the decision was delegated to the Managing Director.

The Committee was informed that the Chairman had been invited to a demonstration of the committee management systems, which had been quite technical and more related to usage by staff than members. However, members could download the app for the new system at the App Store on their iPads to see how this one click solution for accessing committee papers worked.

It was confirmed that the benefits of the software were in terms of efficiencies, rather than short-term savings.

The Chairman noted that the software would provide a very good and accessible system

AGREED

To note the implementation of the new electronic committee management system and the award of the contract.

43 EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt minutes of the meeting of the Service Improvement and Efficiency Committee held on 24 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

(The meeting concluded at 7.30pm)

Chairman

