

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. Bayley, Clark, Dickins, Mrs. George, Mrs. Parkin,
Mrs. Purves, Miss. Stack and Miss. Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Eyre and Raikes

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Fleming be appointed as Chairman for the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Cllr. Fleming in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Dickins be appointed as the Vice Chairman for the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee held on the 3 April 2013 be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

5. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance advised that some other Local Authorities had been involved in a collective switching project which allowed all those who had signed up to switch their utilities provider to receive better value for money. Officers had investigated and found that collective switching did not guarantee a best price, therefore the Council would have its own switch and save website which would allow the public and businesses to find the best deal for

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themselves. The site would look at every energy supplier. The website would be live from September 2014.

In response to questions the Chairman advised that there were limited firms that offered the switch guarantee to pre paid meters due to their nature. The Council's housing partners and HERO Officers were fully versed in energy costs and provided advice for people on meters. The Council would not be responsible if there were to be problems. The Chairman advised that more information would be available shortly.

7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were no referrals from the Cabinet or Audit Committee.

8. Confirmation of Working Groups

Members considered a report that detailed the reconstitution of the Working Group which was set up to review the Council's Communications Strategy. Councillor Miss Stack advised Members of the work carried out by the group in the year 2013/14. Councillor Miss Thornton informed Members that the work the group had undertaken was rewarding. The Chairman asked Members if they thought an increased Membership would be beneficial. Councillor Clark volunteered to be on the group.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the Terms of Reference for the Communications Working Group be agreed subject to an increase in membership to five; and
- b) the Membership be agreed as Councillors Clark, Mrs George, Mrs Parkin, Miss Stack and Miss Thornton.

9. Annual Complaint Monitoring 2013/14

The Customer Service Manager presented a report that detailed the formal complaints received by the Council during the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. A review of the complaints process was undertaken during 2013/14 that focused on the re-alignment of complaints investigation within the new management structure, reducing paperwork. An independent review by the Customer Service Manager of each Stage 1 response before it was sent out was also introduced to ensure consistency across the organisation and to ensure that replies were customer focused regardless of the outcome for the customer. Since the review a significant decrease in Stage 2 complaints had been recorded.

The Customer Service Manager advised that Stage 3 complaints were requests for the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) to investigate. Only in exceptional circumstances would a complaint be dealt with at Stage 3, before a Stage 1 as advice from the LGO was that a complaint had to exhaust the internal review process first. In response to a

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question, the Customer Service Manager informed Members that although the LGO had investigated more complaints in 2013/14 than in 2012/13 it was found that 4 complaints were premature, 4 were not investigated, 7 decisions were made and one case was still open. The complaints that had been closed were invalid, but the LGO reported on each complaint made.

Local Tax complaints were steady and consistent in Stage 1 complaints, with Stage 2 complaints being halved. The reasons for Development Control complaints varied as to whether it was due to the decision made or the time taken. In response to a question the Customer Service Manager advised that the breakdown of the complaints were unknown but could be investigated.

Action 1: The Customer Service Manager to investigate the reasons for Development Control complaints and provide a breakdown of the figures.

The Customer Service Manager advised that the 2013/14 figures for compensation payments were in relation to charges the customers accrued for accessing services and were offered a waiver or compensation for the cost.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Customer Experience Project - Presentation

The Customer Service Manager gave a [presentation](#) to Members regarding the Customer Experience Project which was one of the Council's corporate projects. She explained to Members that she had represented the Council on the Kent Channel Migration project which was made up of 8 Kent authorities. The project had looked at a number of initiatives for channel migration and the Council had looked at improvements for the existing website for refuse collections and behavioural change methods for Revenues customers. The project would focus on how online services were driven forward. The Customer Service Manager gave a demonstration on the new refuse page which would be available for the public to access in the coming weeks.

In response to questions the Customer Service Manager explained that the immediate improvements which could be made to the website were being completed rather than waiting for a new website which would take 6 to 12 months to complete. The new website would be below the spending threshold for European procurement procedures to take effect. Members requested that a full brief be written before contacting suppliers.

It was acknowledged that not all customers used the website and it was one area of the project. Encouraging residents to use the facilities on the website would reduce calls received and allow for greater resource to be allocated to assisting those that preferred telephone or face to face contact.

Members were impressed with the changes that were being made and expressed their thanks to the Customer Services Manager.

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Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

11. Communications strategy and 2013/14 work plan

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented a report detailing the review of the Communication Strategy and the 2014/15 Communications work plan. The review reflected the change in priorities for the Council and had been improved to clearly reflect the purpose of all communications activity for the Council and set a clear framework for the remit of the Communications Team. He advised that Sevenoaks Switching needed to be included within the work plan.

In response to questions the Head of Transformation and Strategy informed Members that press releases were regularly sent to the local papers. Usually the news items that were included were the 'day to day' items such as changes to refuse collection days. Previous advice received from the newspapers were that press releases with photos made better stories, however these stories were not necessarily covered in the newspapers.

Members suggested that 'Members' needed to be included on bullet point 4 of 'Measuring our results' in the Communications Strategy and that in the work plan the following amendments should be made:

- Action 1 – include Communications Working Group in the Milestones column;
- Action 3 – consistency needed to be investigated for joint working partnerships;
- Action 5 – the due date needed to be changed to May 2014 instead of May 2015.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the Communications Strategy and 2014/15 work plan be reviewed; and
- b) it be recommended to Cabinet, subject to the amendments identified by the Advisory Committee for the Council's Communications Strategy and 2014/15 Communications work plan be endorsed.

12. Performance Indicators & Targets for 2014/15

The Committee considered a report setting out performance indicators and targets for 2014/15. Each year the Council undertakes a thorough review of the performance indicators it adopts and the performance targets it sets to continue to support the improvement of services and to enable the Council to deliver on its vision and promises

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to the community. The report recommended that data was collected against 63 local performance indicators. For each indicator Officers had recommended a performance target for 2014/15. The proposed targets reflected Officers' assessment of the available resources to deliver the highest achievable quality of service.

The Head of Transformation and Strategy advised Members that in 2013/14 6% of performance indicators were 'red' and had missed their target by at least 10%. If a target was missed by less than 10% it would be amber.

In response to questions the Head of Transformation and Strategy advised that Licensing dealt with three different types of applications and therefore each would have an indicator. If a third party was involved in the process this was factored into the indicators. He advised that some targets could be reduced although if some of the green targets were reduced this could be more burdensome and would be harder to reach.

Members discussed the indicators for waste and recycling and were advised that the targets were more challenging and it was suggested that it was something that Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee could look at. Members requested to see the cost of planning appeals.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee review the Performance indicators for waste and recycling ; and
- b) the performance targets as detailed within the report be set for 2014/15

13. Work Plan

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.30 PM

CHAIRMAN