



Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 16 June 2015

Attendance

Members of the Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Andrew Wynne

Employees

Ian Fegan	Head of Communications
Sue Handy	Head of Customer Service
Charlotte Johns	Head of Transformation
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel

Cllr Harbans Bagri
Cllr Payal Bedi
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded
- 3 Election of Vice Chair**
The nomination of Cllr Andrew Wynne as Vice- Chair was proposed by Cllr Rita Potter and seconded. Cllr Alan Bolshaw

Resolved - That Cllr Wynne be elected as Vice-Chair of the Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel for the 2015/16 municipal year.
- 4 Minutes of previous meeting (22.4.15)**
The minutes of the meeting of 22.4.15 were approved.

5 **Matters arising**
Budget update and review

Scrutiny Officer confirmed that briefing papers had been sent in response to a request from the panel for further information on the report.

6 **Customer Service Strategy**

Sue Handy, Head of Customer Service, outlined the background to the development of the current strategy detailed in the report. The Head of Customer Services explained that this was a refreshed customer services strategy for the period 2015-2018. The document links to the wider council transformation programme.

The strategy document was informed by the findings and recommendations of the Chanel Shift review. The Head of Customer Services outlined the benefits linked to the introduction of a new customer engagement platform manager information system and the benefits that this will bring to customer and the benefits that will support the delivery of the stated objectives.

The panel queried the intended audience of the strategy document as there was a concern that the document may not be suitable in its current format to the wider public. The panel welcomed the report and praised the quality of the document and the graphics which were informative.

The panel commented that councillors were not explicitly identified in the strategy document as an audience. The panel commented on their experiences of using Customer Services and concern that the current system did not allow proper tracking of the progress of enquiries made on behalf of residents and to be kept informed.

The panel commented that Customer Services staff while the overall experience was positive, there times when staff were not always sure of who should be the best person to deal with a specific query.

The Head of Customer Services explained the limitation of the current customer relationship management system which requires a lot of time consuming tasks to be completed in order to deal with a query and as a result it was difficult to track progress if actions were not followed. The Head of Customer Service acknowledged the issue and explained that the new customer engagement platform relationship management (CRM) system will be introduced in January 2016.

The new CRM system would provide a much more efficient drop-down menu system for staff which would make it easier to record and track progress. The system would allow automatic reminders to the service area after an agreed period, if no response received by an agreed date. The system would also give customers the option to receive automated text or email alerts on progress in dealing with their enquiry.

The panel requested that a report on the impact of the new system be reported to panel meeting on 13 April 2015.

Resolved:

The panel welcomed the report and praised the design and content of the customer services strategy document

The panel agreed to receive a report on the impact of introducing a new customer relationship management system in addressing the issues highlighted by the panel at the meeting on 13 April 2015.

7 **Internal communications strategy and plan-on-a-page**

Ian Fegan, Head of Corporate Communications, outlined the background to the improved internal communication and engagement strategy and its relationship to the Council's wider organisational development strategy.

The Head of Corporate Communications commented that the strategy has been informed by responses to the thematic survey completed in November 2014. Employees were asked as part of the survey to submit ideas about improving internal staff communication. The Head of Corporate Communications commented on research findings on the organisational benefits of improving staff communications.

The Head of Corporate Communications detailed the specific actions introduced to respond to the issues highlighted in the survey, for example, monthly briefings from Managing Director, which have proved effective in giving employees information and are well attended sessions and a new weekly core brief update which managers deliver to their employees.

The Head of Corporate Communications commented on the benefits of digital technology as a tool to engage staff, raising awareness of their contribution to the delivery of the corporate priorities and support improved performance.

The panel commented on the research which reported that 54 per cent of survey respondents said that they felt informed about what was happening in the council and expressed concern about the implications.

The Head of Corporate Communications responded that the regular team meetings, core briefs and the monthly meetings with the Managing Director were part of the strategy to engage with more. The Head of Corporate Communications commented on efforts to drive improved internal communication through managers encouraging them talking to their employees and ask them for ideas for improving the performance of the service.

The panel commented that councillors should be included as a target audience in the strategy document.

The Head of Corporate Communications commented that Councillors were on the distribution list for City People as part of the corporate communications strategy to keep Councillors informed about what was happening. The panel agreed that they should be represented as a specific audience in the strategy. The panel commented on the issue of some employees who do not have access to the internet.

The Head of Corporate Communications explained that council information was included in payslips and other options are being considered to keep people informed

Resolved:

The panel welcomed the report.

8 Corporate Communication Strategy 2015-17

Ian Fegan, Head of Corporate Communications, outlined the background to the corporate communication strategy document 2015-17. The Head of Corporate Communications explained that the council had previously not had a corporate communication strategy. The aim of the strategy was to introduce industry standard practices that would support the council's corporate strategy and deliver more cost effective and successful campaigns in the future.

The strategy provided an opportunity to evaluate what is currently done and use this evidence to deliver more effective and targeted campaigns. The Head of Corporate Communications explained 'digital by design' was important and that residents will be encouraged to sign up to receive information they want, but not spam email. The ambition is reach a target of 20,000 subscribers to the council email information alerts by the end of 2016. The information would use real time data collected from the CRM system discussed earlier in the meeting to deliver a more cost effective and responsive service.

The Head of Corporate Communications compared the major cost differences to using digital compared to traditional communications methods such as printed information. Six key corporate campaigns are planned for the year.

The panel commented on the research findings which reported that 27% of residents felt able to influence decisions made by the Council and that 25% of residents felt the Council provides value for money. A comment was made about the need to improve the quality of services provided. Head of Corporate Communications accepted the point and that it provided an important factor in improving perception, trust and confidence. Head of Corporate Communications responded that the results were based on findings from 2013 and the focus of the strategy was getting more accurate and updated customer feedback that can be used to improve services.

The panel commented on the survey findings which reported that overall 44 per cent of residents were satisfied with Wolverhampton as a place to live and the importance of recognising the scale of the challenge to improving the situation. The panel commented that the survey findings provide a benchmark to measure future progress.

The panel commented on the reference to businesses in the document and queried if the focus of the strategy was on existing or new potential businesses and also the target area. For example, are the target businesses in the Black Country or nationally as part of a strategy to raise the profile of Wolverhampton.

The Head of Corporate Communications responded that work has been done with Business Champions to develop an annual plan of activity. The plan is to build up an accurate customer database and improve the quality of the intelligence. Head of Corporate Communications commented on evidence from large organisations

nationally of the benefits of having a strong focus on customer satisfaction and collecting feedback.

The panel requested a briefing paper outlining the range of work being done as part of the wider efforts to market the City and encourage more businesses to move to Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

The panel requested that a briefing paper be sent outlining the work being done to improve city marketing and engage with the business and retail community.

9 **A marketing strategy for the City Council**

Ian Fegan, Head of Corporate Communications, outlined the background to the development of the marketing strategy for the city council. This report is an update on an earlier report that was presented to Scrutiny Board for comment. The Head of Corporate Communications listed the three main priorities of the strategy and the objectives and linked work streams for achieving them.

The Head of Corporate Communications commented that improving engagement with the business community was an area that needed to be improved and that ideas were being considered to deliver information in a more cost effective way.

The panel queried the level of confidence that the strategy could be delivered. The Head of Corporate Communications detailed current work being done to deliver the strategy and the potential offered by the new CRM system which ensures that decisions are driven by intelligence. The system will provide insights and encourage repeat business. The Head of Corporate Communications commented on the need to work with partners to deliver the strategy.

The panel supported the focus on using business intelligence to underpin the marketing strategy for the City. The panel queried if there was now a clear single marketing brand for Wolverhampton which set out its 'unique selling point'. The panel were concerned about the different types branding being used on publications would lead to confusion about the core brand and reduced its potential impact. The panel made reference to the evidence from witnesses who contributed to the First Impressions of the City scrutiny review which commented on the issue of branding.

The Head of Corporate Communications accepted the point and made reference to the document which talks about a new visual identity and corporate branding focused on the 'City of Wolverhampton'. Wolverhampton is the 19th largest city in England and is the only city in the Black Country. The Head of Corporate Communications commented that not enough is made of Wolverhampton's city status and we need to find a distinctive message.

The Head of Corporate Communications gave the example of the work being done to develop the "Wolverhampton Story". The work is being led by Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy and is supported by the Business Champions.

The panel commented on the importance of having a clear brand for Wolverhampton which set out the vision for the future and creating a good first impression.

The panel agreed that it would be helpful to be sent a copy of the progress report on implementing recommendations from the first impressions of the city review for information that was presented to Scrutiny Board.

The Head of Corporate Communications agreed to a request to provide a position statement about progress to the panel meeting in January 2016.

The panel discussed the history of Wolverhampton and that this should be part of how the city is marketed in the future.

Resolved:

The panel would like a briefing note on what the council is doing to sell Wolverhampton to retailers.

The panel requested that a briefing paper be sent to panel to update on progress in January 2016.

10 **Performance Management Framework**

Charlotte Johns, Head of Transformation, outlined the background to the development of the council's performance management framework and how it supports the refreshed corporate plan priorities. The Head of Transformation explained the different parts of the strategy and its focus on building on existing good practice.

The Head of Transformation gave a summary of the key points detailed in the performance management framework 2015-18 document.

The panel welcomed the report. The panel queried the underlying key performance indicators in the documents that will be used to review progress. The Head of Transformation explained that performance indicators are listed in the Corporate Plan, which will be going to Council on 15 July. It was also explained that going forward different sources of evidence will be used to show progress and a rounded view of performance.

Resolved:

The panel welcomed the report.

11 **Refreshed Council Appraisal Scheme**

Charlotte Johns, Head of Transformation, outlined the background to the development of the council's refreshed appraisal scheme. The Head of Transformation explained that changes were made to the previous scheme to simplify the process and respond to feedback. Latest performance shows that 73 per cent of employees receiving an appraisal during a 12 month period. The changes were aimed at increasing the number of employees who had an appraisal within 12 months. The new system would have a series of menu options which will make it easier to complete, with the option of adding comments where appropriate.

The Head of Transformation explained the responsibilities of managers to complete employee appraisals.

The panel welcomed the report. The panel queried if employees had mandatory training on the appraisal system. The Head of Transformation responded that training and support is provided, and that monitoring will be done to check that appraisals are being completed. The Head of Transformation accepted that work was needed to be done to increase the number of appraisals.

The panel queried if consideration could in the future to replacing the system with an online version rather than a paper version as part of the 'digital by design' approach. The Head of Transformation responded that she supported the idea of reducing the paperwork and making the system more efficient, and this will be looked in to.

The panel queried if the appraisal process would help to identify gifted people within the Council. The Head of Transformation explained that different initiatives were being used to grow and retain internal talent. The Head of Transformation

commented on the benefits of the council's participation in the national graduate development programme and on-going work with Wolverhampton University to fill skills gaps

Resolved:

The panel welcomed the report.

The panel would like their comments included in the refreshed council appraisal scheme to be presented to (Cabinet Resources) Panel.

The meeting closed at 19:20