

Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 28 June 2016

Attendance

Members of the Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Andrew Wynne (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)
Cllr Louise Miles

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Sue Handy	Head of Customer Service
Andy Hoare	Head of Services - ICT
Colin Parr	Head of Governance

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 Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

2 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

3 **Minutes of previous meeting (20 April 2016)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 6: Future Money: Budget Update and Review Report

The panel agreed that Cllr Johnson, Cabinet Members for Resources and Mark Taylor, Director of Finance, be invited to a future meeting present a briefing on the financial implications on the Council's financial modelling work and forecasting work following the vote to leave the European Union.

5 **Future Works - ensuring that we have the right IT infrastructure and business processes**

Andy Hoare, Head of Service, ICT briefed the plan on the use of improved technology to support business change. Head of Service referred to the example in the report on changes to the business process when a member of the public reports that their bin has not be emptied. Head of Service explained how technology could be used to reduce and automate elements in the current lengthy process involved to deliver a better customer service experience. Head of Service commented on the advantages to the Council in making use of new technological developments.

Head of Service that the example cited that refuse collection is possible with good 4G connectivity which would allow someone to match an address to a problem about a collection. Head of Service commented that the Council has technology to give a faster and better customer service experience. Wolverhampton is learning from the experience of other local authorities who are introducing technological solutions to the delivery of the council's business.

The panel had concerns about the intrusive nature of using personal data to contact a resident about a problem with their bin collection. There was also concern about how groups such as elderly people would cope with such a system. Head of Service accepted this was an issue but responded that the Council was following a digital by design rather than digital by default – where the public would not have a choice about how to access a service. The aim of the change is to provide another method for the public, while also supporting people to use the technology, where it would save time.

Head of Service explained that Wolverhampton is catching up with other authorities such as Coventry, Telford & Wrekin in terms of introducing digital services.

The panel queried the planned expenditure of £3.5 million and how the risk of spending money on technology which may become outdated or more costly was being managed. Head of Service explains that the budget includes provision to bring in expertise needed, however the plan is the Council becomes self-sufficient by learning the skills from experts to support the process of change.

Head of Service, accepted the risk and the Council was adopting a major change which would mean less money spent on technology and the use developments such as cloud storage which allow services to adapt to future issues more easily. Head of Service commented on changes in how the Council purchases software licenses to reduce costs.

The panel requested the a briefing paper be presented on the following details

1. The level of digital exclusion in Wolverhampton.
2. The current number of people using new services compared was originally expected.
3. The Council response time to enquiries by email, telephone and social media sites
4. Provide an example of where technological improvements could make a difference to how services are currently delivered.

Head of Service explained that Wolverhampton has good broadband coverage. The level of digital exclusion is estimated to be about 55-65%. Wolverhampton has a high proportion of smartphone users and public has access to the internet through the network of libraries.

Head of Service commented that the public has the option to use web chat to discuss issues with the Council. Sue Handy, Head of Customer Service, explained that employees in the service monitor chat discussion and it also provides useful feedback to find out where people have tried to use an online service but was not successful. The information provided will help identify where changes are needed to make improvements.

Head of Customer Service explained that the email response time depends on the issue. The Council receives 10,000 to 15,000 emails a month and there is work being planned that in the future a percentage of these emails will be sent direct to the service providers, to reduce delays in response.

Head of Service explained that the programme would be delivered in phases. The initial phase is getting the systems working properly before making further changes. The Council is building digital services and developing citizen portals, which are part of the refurbished Civic Centre.

The panel queried how the costs of the programme will be managed to avoid cost overruns. Head of Service explained that problems with IT projects in the past are managing changes in the scope. The programme will be delivered in phases and the budget is monitored closely.

Resolved

The panel welcomed the report and noted the progress of the programme.

The Head of Service to provide a briefing paper to a future meeting with the following information.

1. The level of digital exclusion in Wolverhampton.
2. The current number of people using new services compared was originally expected.
3. The Council response time to enquiries by email, telephone and social media sites
4. Provide another example of where technological improvements could make a difference to how services are currently delivered.

The Head of Service to provide further update report on progress of the digital transformation programme to a future meeting.

6 **Future Customer - improving customer service**

Sue Handy, Head of Customer Service, presented a report on progress against delivery of the Customer Service Transformation Programme.

Head of Customer Service referred to progress since a report was presented to the panel. Head of Customer Service commented on work done with employees of newly

migrated services and review to look at streamlining processes to improve the customer experience.

Head of Customer Services explained the next steps in the process and the plans to migrate other services as detailed in the Migration Wave Plan. Head of Customer Services commented on the work done with employees in adult social care to improve customer service offer. The planned changes include providing people with self-service as part of the future spaces programme in autumn 2016

The panel discussed the public response to ReportIt app. Head of Customer Service commented that there has been a mixed response. The current system needs manual intervention. Head of Service, ICT, explained the app is being redeveloped to make it more automatic and user friendly.

The panel discussed the work done to develop the Draft Family Group Model.

The panel queried the employee changes affected by migration of service and the reference in the report to the restructuring to ensure that the right employees are placed in the right groups. The panel discussed the issue of vacant posts arising from the review and asked for more information about the impact on posts which become vacant.

The panel welcomed the report.

Resolved

The panel asked that a further report on the human resource impact following the migration of employees detailed in the customer service migration plan to a future meeting.