

Lancashire County Council

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 16th November, 2018 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor David O'Toole (Chair)

County Councillors

J Fillis	A Riggott
S Holgate	M Salter
M Iqbal	D Whipp
E Lewis	G Wilkins
E Nash	B Yates
P Rigby	

County Councillor Barrie Yates replaced County Councillor Jayne Rear for this meeting.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2018

Item 4 Update from the Chair – It was noted by the committee that subsequent legal advice on the gritter tracking system had differed from the information provided by officers at the 20 July 2018 meeting. The committee agreed to note this and stress the importance of accurate and timely information being provided to the committee.

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on 21 September 2018 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Customer Access Service - Update on Performance and Savings Initiatives

The Chair welcomed Terry White, Customer Service Manager; and County Councillor Peter Buckley, Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services, to the meeting.

The purpose of the report presented was to provide the Customer Access Service (CAS), operational performance and key statistics for the period April 2018 to August 2018. The report also provided a comparison against the previous financial year and included the savings plan for the service 2015-21.

It was reported that the CAS currently delivered first point of contact for telephone, email and social media interactions for 28 LCC services. The CAS also processed Blue Badge applications, Crisis Support applications and Customer Satisfaction feedback reports. It was highlighted that these services were very diverse and varied widely. Each service had its own data handling tool which contacts were recorded in, requiring Customer Access staff to be able to competently use over 25 specialist systems.

Members were informed that so far this financial year there had been 38 compliments and 31 complaints.

It was highlighted that social media was a new channel of contact that had been introduced and had proved successful. It would be a contributing factor in the Digital Strategy as the team moved forward. There was a request for the information on social media data to be broken down.

In terms of future savings, members were advised that it was about how the CAS could do things quicker with the appropriate staffing in place. In relation to the self-serve approach, members enquired how this was going to develop from a digital point of view and one of the options was the use of voice recognition currently being developed.

Concerns were raised over the out of hour's service, mainly around highways issues. Members were advised that funding was an issue for an out of hour's service and this option presented numerous challenges around its cost effectiveness.

It was highlighted that staff morale was very important to the CAS and a new structure has been implemented this year which addressed many of the issues raised in the 2017 staff survey and staff morale was good. The committee was informed that there was an overall improvement in performance despite a reduction in staff.

In terms of benchmarking against other authorities, members enquired how the CAS stood in comparison to other authorities. As part of its service challenge the CAS went out to 50 other authorities to understand how their contact centres operated. It was noted that LCC was very cost effective and very good with

telephone advice. The stark contrast was that LCC received more contacts than per population. This suggested that further work was required on the digital offering currently in place.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

5. Household Waste Recycling Centres

The Chair welcomed Steve Scott, Head of Service Waste Management; and County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Deputy Leader of the County Council, to the meeting.

The report presented how the review of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) service had been conducted to consider operating efficiency and financial savings following its transfer back in-house in April 2018.

It was reported that staffing costs was the main area that had the greatest potential for savings. There were a number of options regarding opening hours and the number of days the sites were open. Members were advised that the option put forward was for the sites to reduce open hours as it was recognised that outside peak hours, the demand for the service was limited. It was also recommended that the quieter sites move to 5 day a week opening.

Regarding the changes in days opened and opening hours of HWRCs there were concerns raised over the consequential fly-tipping and the costs this would incur. It was pointed out to the committee that there was no evidence to link HWRCs and fly-tipping as HWRCs did not accept commercial waste and the majority of fly-tipping was commercial waste.

The committee enquired if there had been consultation with district councils regarding the savings on staffing costs, the proposed reduced hours and mitigating the fly-tipping situation. District councils had been informed but the proposal would be subject to a full consultation as part of the service challenge process.

Staff at the HWRCs were commended for the work they did, not only in directing where waste should go but also with helping people. It was felt that the reduction in staffing would impact on the service provision. It was highlighted that communication with the public, informing them of the days sites were open and the hours they were open was vital. And it was noted that all organisations would be informed.

A new resolution was proposed and seconded, that ' The Internal Scrutiny Committee welcome the proposal not to extend charging on tyres and gas bottles but express deep concern at the reduced opening days for 7 centres and the reduced daily opening hours for all in view of the impact on fly-tipping and the

cost of collection to the public purse of the consequential fly-tipping.' On being put to the vote the new resolution was lost.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. Grit Bins and Non-Priority Routes Task and Finish Group - Initial Response

The Chair gave a verbal update of the initial response received in relation to the agreed report circulated to the Cabinet Member and senior officers following the Internal Scrutiny Committee in September.

It was reported that responses to the task and finish group's recommendations were currently being collated. Not all recommendations had been responded to yet as the county council was seeking advice from external organisations such as the Association for Public Excellence (APSE).

It was hoped that a full written response would be presented at the next meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 18 January 2019.

Resolved: That the initial response be noted.

7. Task and Finish Group Request - External Scrutiny Committee

The report set out the request from the External Scrutiny Committee for a task and finish group to be established on strengthening flood prevention and preparedness in Lancashire.

Resolved: That the request to establish a task and finish group on strengthening flood prevention and preparedness in Lancashire be approved.

8. Work Programme 2018/19

The work plan for the Internal Scrutiny Committee for the 2018/19 year was presented.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Internal Scrutiny Committee would take place on Friday 18 January 2019 at 10.00am in Cabinet Room B (The Diamond Jubilee Room) at the County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston