

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 19 February 2019 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan (Chairman)
Councillor Lewis Strange (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Angela White (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn

In Attendance:

Mark Sturgess Executive Director of Operations and Head of Paid Service
Michelle Carrington Strategic Lead Customer First
Ady Selby Strategic Manager - Services
Rachel Parkin Home Choices Team Manager
Ele Durrant Democratic and Civic Officer

Also In Attendance:

David Barratt, Gainsborough Foyer
Faye, Gainsborough Foyer
One member of the public

Apologies:

Councillor David Bond
Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings

Membership:

There were no substitutes

59 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND VARIATION TO THE AGENDA

The Chairman welcomed all present, Members and Officers, and extended a special welcome to David and Faye from the Gainsborough Foyer. He also proposed a variation to the agenda for the public reports to be heard in the reverse order, that was to say, that the report regarding the Customer First Update be heard prior to the report on the Garden Waste Review. This was seconded and, on being voted upon, it was

RESOLVED that items 6i) and 6ii) on the agenda be heard in reverse order.

60 MEETING OF THE CHALLENGE AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

61 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this time.

62 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

The Committee gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions, as at 11 February 2019.

The Democratic and Civic Officer advised Members that of the two completed items, the workshops for the Progress and Delivery Working Group had been arranged with the Head of Paid Service with regards to the measures for the coming year.

RESOLVED that the Matters Arising Schedule as at 11 February 2019 be received and noted.

63 PRESENTATION ITEM - GAINSBOROUGH FOYER RE YOUTH HOUSING PROVISION

The Chairman again welcomed David and Faye from the Gainsborough Foyer. Members heard first from the Home Choices Team Manager who explained the background of the Foyer and how funding cuts had forced a review of how the building was used. She highlighted that, as a result of changes within social care, there was no longer the need to provide accommodation for 16 or 17 year olds. After considering different options, it had been agreed for the accommodation to be used for 18 to 24 years old with low support needs and with a view to it being 'move-on' accommodation, that is, to support individuals to gain their own tenancy or other housing arrangement.

Members were then given a presentation by David Barratt, Manager, explaining the make-up of the Longhurst Group and where Axiom, who run the Gainsborough Foyer, sat within the Group. Members heard details of the different kinds of accommodation provided across the area and how the Gainsborough Foyer had evolved, as explained by the Home Choices Team Manager.

It was highlighted that there was a real commitment to providing services within the locality and the staff at the Foyer worked hard to help residents there become a part of the local community. It was explained that there was a primary, positive focus on giving individuals the time and support to be able to move out of the Foyer and this would often include anything from budget managing, interacting with others to looking after their own space. The focus was always on the need of the individual and ensuring each person received the support they needed to progress.

Members were keen to offer their praise for the work carried out by the team at the Foyer and enquired about other services available to residents, such as mental health services or suchlike. It was explained that the first contact would always be with the GP but they did work closely with local mental health services where necessary. There was recognition for the dedication of the staff and Members heard that the team working at the Foyer were

incredible and worked flexibly around the needs of the residents to focus on their development and progression.

With no further questions from Members, the Chairman thanked both David and Faye, and the Home Choices Team Manager, for giving their time and also for the dedication shown to the young people in their residence. On behalf of the Committee, he praised all involved with the work of the Gainsborough Foyer and again extended his thanks to all.

64 CUSTOMER FIRST 6 MONTH UPDATE

The Strategic Lead for Customer First introduced an update report regarding the progress of the Customer First Strategy in the six months since the last report was presented to the Committee. She reiterated that the strategy was a three year programme with phased projects of differing sizes. In the time since she last visited Committee, there had been 25 projects commenced, some of which had been completed already and some of which would be ongoing. The Strategic Lead explained that, rather than trying to cover all of these projects, she would highlight the key issues for Members but she was happy to take questions on any aspect of the strategy. It was highlighted that, through the report, Members were asked to comment on the progress made so far, confirm whether they were satisfied with the direction of travel and the outcomes achieved.

One of the key projects had been the rollout of digital registration for the green waste subscription. The focus had been on encouraging digital methods of signing up with almost 60% of applications being completed online. As the service entered the second year, over 80% of communication had been through digital methods meaning messages could be tailored to individuals' needs rather than a blanket mailshot, and savings had been made with reduced paper usage and postage costs. It was clear, however, that this did not preclude anyone from registering over the phone or in person.

Another key project had been streamlining the payments process for market stall holders. Previously stall holders had been invoiced after attending market which had been administratively intensive and also open for errors and disputes. In order to resolve these issues, 'on the day' payment had been introduced where stall holders were required to pay on the day they were attending market. Members heard this had proved very popular and all bar one stall holder had signed up, although this was due to reasons outside of the stall holder's control. By enabling payments to be taken directly, some stall holders had chosen to pay in advance, some were able to pay off owed monies and it had also significantly reduced the administrative processes.

Members heard that, in relation to the Trinity Arts Centre, there had been difficulties for customers trying to make bookings as the opening hours for the booking office had been limited. There had been a trial period of Customer Services taking bookings and this had proved so successful it had now become a permanent function within the team. There had also been changes made to the 'call queuing' system which had introduced improved menu choices, redirection to the correct services if it was not for a West Lindsey District Council query (for example highways) and the means to monitor peak call times. This monitoring had had a positive impact for staffing rotas and ensuring there were sufficient staff members on shift to answer calls at the times of high demand.

There were questions from Members regarding some of the technological improvements and also plans for the reconfiguration of the Customer Services Hub on the ground floor. It was clarified that, in the five years since the previous changes (when the Department for Work and Pensions first moved into the Hub), there had been significant increases in customer numbers for all services on the ground floor and as such, it was proving necessary to reconfigure the layout in order to make it more accessible for all to use. It had been recognised that there were more efficient ways of dealing with some of the customer queries and so this would be taken into consideration for the re-configuration. It was confirmed that there would be consultation with Members once possible options had been drafted.

There was further discussion regarding the Council's website and whether there were any options for making improvements at an earlier date. It was explained that, as a local authority website, West Lindsey's was considered to be of a high quality however, it was not considered easily accessible for customers. There was ongoing work with regards to developing a more user-friendly website for launch at the end of the current contract.

There was praise for achievements to date and the Customer Experience Officer was particularly recognised for the changes she had implemented in regards to resolving customer complaints.

There was further discussion regarding bringing together council responses to all routes of enquiry, whether that be online, via the telephone or in person, and ensuring that customers did not need to repeat themselves at every point of contact with the Council. This was welcomed by Members and it was felt it would have a significant impact on customer satisfaction levels.

With no further comment from Members it was

RESOLVED that the progress through the Customer First Strategy be supported and achievements to date be noted.

65 GARDEN WASTE REVIEW

Members of Committee were asked to give consideration to a report regarding the 12 month review following the introduction of charges for collecting green waste. The Strategic Manager - Services advised Committee that the report had been seen at the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee to agree the charge for the coming year and that Members of the Challenge and Improvement Committee had requested to be kept informed of information such as the impact on fly-tipping or contaminated recycling bins. With the report presented to Members, the Strategic Manager - Services sought to reassure the Committee of the success of the scheme and answer any concerns they may have.

Members heard that subscriptions to the garden waste service had exceeded expectations with 58.3% of households signing up to the service compared with initial predictions of 50%. There had been an initial increase in missed collections as a result of the new system, non-subscribers reporting missed collections as well as increased numbers requesting an assisted collection service. Supervisors worked closely with teams to resolve these issues and by July, there were fewer missed collections than in the previous year.

With regards to concerns of increased fly-tipping or other bins being used for garden waste, the Strategic Manager - Services explained this had not been shown to be the case. There had been a significant increase in the sale of home composters and data from Household Waste Centres had shown an overall reduction in waste, especially garden waste, over the year. This was presumed to be as a result of the long hot summer. Rates of fly-tipping had also reduced over the year period.

A Member of Committee questioned the charge in comparison with other areas as well as the necessity of the four month break in collections. She explained that within her ward there were a number of households who struggled to get to a household recycling centre and were unable to maintain their gardens satisfactorily as a result of the reduced collections. There were also concerns regarding fallen leaves causing blocked drains and localised flooding. The Strategic Manager - Services explained that the service charge and collection period had been decided upon following public consultation, although he appreciated there would be differing needs across the district. He also explained that there was more intensive street cleaning scheduled at relevant times to deal with fallen leaves.

There was further discussion regarding the rates of fly tipping and Members felt that while the figures were encouraging, it was necessary to remain vigilant as there could be increases in years to come. Thanks were also extended to the operatives for the swift resolution of initial difficulties.

A Member of Committee enquired about the Government's Waste and Resource Strategy. It was explained there would be an update for Members in the upcoming newsletter but that there would be no immediate changes to waste collection services. It would be a priority for the Council to implement the strategy however the details were yet to be confirmed.

At the conclusion of discussions, Members again offered their thanks to the Strategic Manager - Services and his teams and it was

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the year one performance of the subscription based garden waste service be welcomed; and
- 2) the decision making process of year two subscription level be supported.

66 FORWARD PLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer explained to Members that the forward plan was presented in a new format as the Democratic Services Team had recently started using a new reports management system. Items were now listed by committee and in date order.

With no comments from Members it was

RESOLVED that the forward plan be noted.

67 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Democratic and Civic Officer explained that, similar to the forward plan, the work plan had been created using the new system. She added that there was one item missing from the plan for the April meeting, that being the Progress and Delivery report for period three. This report also included the additional information regarding the Enforcement Team as had been discussed at the meeting in January.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

68 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

69 PREPARATION FOR SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Members were advised that, as there would be a representative from Thames Ambulance Service Ltd at the meeting in April, it would be useful to assemble a list of questions from Members to share with the representative in advance of their attendance. The Head of Paid Service highlighted that these would act as a prompt in the first instance and would not preclude Members from asking other questions on the night to test the answers they were being given. The main purpose of providing questions in advance was to allow the representatives of the organisation to come prepared so the Committee could make the most of the opportunity. Based on discussion between Members a list of questions was drawn up and it was agreed for this to be circulated to Members for comment.

RESOLVED that the questions, once circulated, be used as a guide for Members to then ask supplementary questions as they wished.

70 CHAIRMAN'S THANKS

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chairman explained he would not be present at the meeting in April and therefore would not meet with the Committee prior to the elections in May. He thanked Committee Members for their support and dedication to the Committee. The Vice Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Chairman for his commitment and fair leadership.

The meeting concluded at 8.25 pm.

Chairman