
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 7 MARCH 2016 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY

Present: Councillors Griffiths (Chairman), Ferguson (Vice-Chairman), Fowler, Hones, Miles, Pemberton, M Skeels (Jnr) and Yallop

Also Present: Councillor Turner (Portfolio Holder for Coastal Protection)

In Attendance: Commercial Manager (Mark Westall), Parking and Seafronts Manager (Ian Taylor), and Democratic Services Officers (Janey Nice and Katie Sullivan).

27. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and explained how he wished the business on the agenda to be considered.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

29. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee, held on 25 January 2016, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

31. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Coastal Protection informed the Committee that his Portfolio was currently responsible for 44 public conveniences in the Tendring District. He said that it was impossible to control who used the conveniences but that it was up to the Council to clear up whatever mess was left behind. Councillor Turner also confirmed to the Committee that if a public convenience was closed down it did not save the Council any money (unless it was demolished) as business rates still had to be paid. He added also that if a public convenience was to be demolished it would be unlikely that it would ever be replaced by another new toilet.

Councillor Turner also informed the Committee it was difficult to find cleaners for the public toilets and going in-house would not be cost effective. He then reminded the Committee of an incident in 2012 when it was noticed one Monday morning that the company who dealt with the cleaning of the toilets had gone bankrupt and the toilets all over the District had not been cleaned. However, he said, due to the sterling work of the relevant Officers a new contract had been in place by Thursday of the same week and the toilets were soon re-opened.

He further reminded the Committee that the company, Miti, who currently had the public toilet cleaning contract, had made it clear to the Council that their next contract for cleaning the toilets would be more expensive.

Members asked questions including when the toilet cleaning contract would next be due for renewal and were told by Mr Taylor this would take place in 2017 and when asked further questions, said that Officers would make preliminary investigations and have

discussions with various Council departments including Legal. He added that the current contract for the service was approximately £250,000 per annum.

Members further discussed the issue of various public toilets with Councillor Turner to which both he and Mr Taylor responded appropriately.

The Council's Parking and Seafronts Manager (Ian Taylor) then reminded the Committee that the Public Health Act 1936 gave Local Authorities the power to provide public conveniences, but that there was no duty for Councils to provide them. He said that the Council spent £802,000 on the provision of approximately 40 toilets across the District with 28 of them having disabled facilities. He further added that with the exception of the Connaught Avenue toilets in Frinton-on-Sea, all of the Council's toilets were free of charge to users.

Mr Taylor stated that vandalism was a common and recurring problem and this meant that the new Strategy would not be straight forward, as along with vandalism, there were also problems with drug taking and other criminal activity, especially in toilets that had low usage and were in a poor condition.

Mr Taylor said that the overall vision behind the Strategy was: "To provide Accessible, Safe, High Quality Public Conveniences for Residents and Visitors Alike". He added that there had not been a lot of investment in the toilets for decades and that they had been ignored for too long. He added that visitors to the toilets expected better conditions and it was now time to take a strategic approach and take an honest and open look at how the Council addressed its public conveniences.

He said that the Council had toilets that were good examples of excellence. Walton Pier was one such case where planners and developers had worked together and that the Clacton changing place was of an award winning design which provided for people with the most severe disabilities; it was a first class facility with underfloor heating and showers and was immaculate and that it was an example of how the Council should aspire to providing toilets of that quality. He added, when asked, that to use the Clacton changing facility, a person needed to be registered for use as it would be impossible to maintain if it was in general public use and said there was a link to register to use it on the Council's website under the public conveniences link. He also confirmed there were similar changing facilities at Walton and Dovercourt and that they cost around £100,000 to build provided by external investment.

The Committee discussed the various toilets in the District with suggestions of how they could be maintained and it was agreed that 30 minutes be set aside at the start of the next Committee meeting to further discuss the issue of public conveniences.

The Committee asked **CABINET** to note: That -

- (a) Consideration should be given to preserving public toilet facilities in or around Garden Road, Jaywick, Clacton-on-Sea, with a refurbishment of the current facilities;
- (b) Consideration should be given to the Frinton toilet charging model for replication in other key areas across the District;
- (c) Consideration should to be given to a charging system for all Council owned toilets; and
- (d) Consideration should be given to approaching commercial premises that may offer their toilet facilities to the public in exchange for a reduction in business rates.

32. UPDATE OF DIGITALISATION OF COUNCIL SERVICES INCLUDING MAILROOM FUNCTIONS

The Council's Commercial Manager (Mark Westall) said he would be giving an update on the digitalisation of the Council services and would mainly focus on the work that was being done at the Print Unit Bungalow in Alexandera Road.

Mr Westall said that the Council's former Democratic Services Manager had worked on delivering a new electronic Democratic Services system to replace the current Eghenda system. He said that the new system was known as Modern.Gov and the Council's Democratic Services Officers were currently practising and getting to know the new system. He added that this new system would save a lot of printing costs of Committee reports and papers.

He then said that the Council had adopted the 'Channel Shift' in January 2016 which had taken almost two years to complete. This included the use of online forms by the public with in excess of 7,000 forms now completed online which in the past would have been done by telephone or face to face with an Officer. He said that the roll out had reduced the average talking time with an Officer from 6 minutes to 3 minutes.

Mr Westall said that the Mitel Contact Centre software, which would be operational from April, would mean all telephone calls to the Council would be received in the Contact Centre unless direct dialled to an extension. The Council, he said, would still publish telephone numbers for specific services, and said that if different services were all received in one contact centre, the staff could be trained up to take up more than one type of call rather than it being inefficient for each department receiving telephone calls. He added that as a Managerial restructuring was taking place it would free-up staff to become part of this initiative. It was commented by a Member that they were not aware of the current Managerial re-structuring and felt that Members needed to be made more aware of what was happening.

Mr Westall informed the Committee that software was being looked at in order to monitor customer satisfaction and that the next Phase was for 8 self-service kiosks across the District with one currently in use at the Clacton Leisure Centre. He added that there was another one in Pier Avenue, Clacton-on-Sea and Harwich would have the next one at the Jobcentre Plus in the High Street, Dovercourt in conjunction with the Department of Work and Pensions. Each kiosk would have a customer services representative at the outset and that money had been set aside for this part of Phase 2 of the Channel Shift project. He then said that the next kiosk after that would likely be in Walton-on-the-Naze if a suitable site could be found.

Mr Westall said that savings were being made by 7,000 forms being filled in online and that a face to face meeting with an Officer cost around £8.50 per meeting, phone calls around £2.50 and online forms were a lot more cost effective. He added that at Pier Avenue, reception staff had been reduced with the reduction in public footfall and that currently efficiencies were being studied.

He said that at the Council's Contact Centre, calls were being dealt with more quickly but that the number of calls had not been reduced and each caller was told that forms could be dealt with online. A Member suggested that at the start of each phone call a message be added informing the caller that perhaps looking at contacting the Council online might be better for them and Mr Westall agreed that a suitable message could be put in place when the new software was installed.

Mr Westall then informed the Committee of the work being done at the Print Unit bungalow with five work streams being identified, which were:

- Centralised print hub;
- Outgoing post;
- Incoming post;
- Bungalow being made fit for purpose; and

- Back scanning of paper files

He said that the Council had got rid of most of the desk printers with just several multi-purpose printers throughout the Council, but that in fact the users should be using the print hub at the bungalow for major print jobs. When asked about identifying the worse offenders of over-use of the multi-purpose printers, Mr Westall said that it could be dealt with by each department having its own four digit code, the printer would recognise the code so that the relevant department would then be recharged.

When asked by a Member why some departments were not using the Print Unit Mr Westall informed the Committee that because printing by the Print Unit for internal jobs was expensive as those were re-charged, the departments were using the multi-purpose printers instead and he added that all internal print jobs at the Print Unit should be free to the internal departments and not re-charged until the end of the year when the cost could be split between the various departments for their work.

The Committee were informed by Mr Westall that in December 2014 the Cabinet had agreed funding of £35,000 for works on the bungalow, £31,500 for equipment replacement and £50,000 for staffing to do the back scanning of paper files. The bungalow, he said, had been refurbished now which had added 30 years life to the bungalow, this had cost only £20,500 so far with a probable final cost of around £24,000 which would mean an underspend on the project.

Mr Westall informed the Committee that the new Unit would have equipment that could stuff envelopes for major print jobs which would further save Officer time.

On the outgoing post, Mr Westall informed the Committee he wanted as much outgoing mail to be sent electronically as possible, whether the outgoing mail was a one-off or part of a major mail out. He explained how it was intended that mail was sent to the Unit and sent out in special pre-printed envelopes (PPI) and how much this would save in postage costs. He also explained that the PPI envelopes would be of a standard C5 size.

Mr Westall then explained that all incoming mail to the Council would be opened at the new Unit, scanned and then sent by email to the relevant designated person in each department for onward distribution. He explained that Driving Licences, Passports and other sensitive documents could also be scanned, verified and sent straight back to the owner and this would save data protection issues.

On back scanning, he said, that it was planned to digitalise all possible paper files using one member of staff from each department. He added that this process would start with the Planning Department.

The Committee noted the work that was being done and thanked Mr Westall for attending the meeting.

33. ANY NEW ITEMS TO BE ADDED TO THE WORK PROGRAMME

1. Discuss the matter of public conveniences at the start of the next meeting of the Committee;
2. Review the new toilet cleaning contract before it is signed by the Council; and
3. Update on Universal Credit to be added to the Work Programme.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman confirmed that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was to be held on Monday 11 April 2016 **but reminded the Committee that a special meeting would be arranged to further consider the issue of Universal Credit in April/May 2016.**

The meeting was declared closed at 9.37 p.m.

Chairman