

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday, 30th March, 2016

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Bob Goodman (Vice-Chair), Christopher Pearce, Colin Barrett, Andrew Furse and Alan Hale (In place of Jasper Becker)

58 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

59 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

60 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Jasper Becker sent apologies and was substituted by Councillor Alan Hale.

61 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

62 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

63 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There was none.

64 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

Following a query from Councillor Hale regarding whether developers are asked to pay for damage they have caused, the Panel agreed to pass this question onto Kelvin Packer - Highways Manager and copy to relevant Cabinet Members Anthony Clarke and Liz Richardson. The officer agreed to report back to the Panel.

65 CUSTOMER CONNECT (COUNCIL CONNECT)

Tracey Long, Group Manager Strategy and Change Customer Services, gave a presentation to the Panel on 'Customer Contact Review – 2015/16' covering the following points:

- Customer Contact Review – Approach
- Overview of volumes for services within review
- IT systems – picture
- Opportunities – timescales (Short/Medium/Long Term)
- Requests by Ward Report

(Slides from the presentation are attached to the agenda papers for this meeting).

Georgina Jackman demonstrated a Ward Report (not yet live).

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

In response to a query from Councillor Barrett, the officer explained that the Ward Report does not show complaints in full detail but there are sub categories. She further explained that it is not possible to show the name of the complainant due to data protection issues.

Members asked officers if the system could provide feedback to them. The officer explained that it was hoped that Members would eventually be able to log on to the system to track complaints but that this system is not yet live. Councillor Bevan explained that if you insert a sentence requiring feedback then the officers will respond, the officer agreed that Members must specifically request feedback. Councillor Barrett asked that all members be made aware of this. Councillor Barrett asked what the expected response time is for a service issue to be resolved, the officer explained that this varied depending on Service Level Agreements with different departments.

In response to questions from Councillor Furse, the officer explained that it was not yet possible to interrogate the system down to specific streets or find out which are the longest issues to be resolved. The officer explained that there is work going on to get robust agreements between departments and Council Connect on timescales for resolving issues.

Councillor Barrett asked that if no response is received, is there a mechanism for checking. The officer explained that if the complaint has gone through the CRM system, it will be logged and Council Connect staff can see if work is in progress or completed.

'My Place' app demonstration

Angela Parratt, Head of Transformation, demonstrated the 'My Place' app which has been developed in house by the IT department. She explained that it is not yet live and is due to undergo beta testing with a view to going live in May or June 2016. She demonstrated how to report a pot hole (for example) on this new system. She also explained its other functions including: local information; car park information;

Council newsfeed; navigation routes; waste collections; planning applications; roadworks; parks; schools and health service information.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Barrett asked the cost of developing and maintaining the app and what the likely uptake might be. The officer explained that the app had been developed by a member of the IT staff in house and would only take 3-4 days per month to update. She explained that more and more people now have Smart phones and that the app will be free for people to use.

Councillor Hale stated that this is a fantastic, comendable forward move and expressed an interest in being part of the testing. He stated that this should save Members time in their ward work.

Kelvin Packer, Head of Highways, stated that he thought the app would be beneficial to his service area as the app would show the coordinates of an issue which would save time for his officers finding defects in rural locations.

Councillor Goodman asked if this could be sold to other authorities. The officer explained that aspects of it could be sold as other authorities are not as far along.

Councillor Furse asked if the system could filter multiple complaints about the same issue. The officer explained that there had been no volume testing yet. Councillor Furse stated that the Twitter system works well and this could be another channel.

The officer explained that all Council staff could be reporting which may lead to less inspections.

The Chair thanked officers.

66 WELFARE REFORM - UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Ian Savigar, Divisional Director Customer Services, introduced the report.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Hale stated that he is concerned that the people least able to look after themselves are worse off. He asked if the authority is feeding back to the Government on this. The officer explained that he is on the Local Authority Universal Credit Working Group which is constantly feeding back to the Government. He explained that the issues raised recently by Ian Duncan Smith MP are similar to the ones raised by the Working Group. He further explained that customers can apply for money to cover the first five weeks.

In response to further questions from Councillor Hale, the officer responded that there is a 3-4 year timescale for Universal Credit. He further explained that it would not be the aim of the Council to close the CAB. Councillor Hale explained that a lot of people turn to the CAB. Councillor Furse stated that Members signpost residents to the CAB and it is a valuable resource that a lot of residents use.

In response to questions from Councillor Furse, the officer explained that regarding people wishing to downsize as a result of the spare bedroom tax, there are people still impacted. Discretionary housing benefit is being used but the amount will not last.

Regarding people moving in and out of work, the officer explained that he has visited Croydon and they explained that transition in and out of work (and on and off benefits) had been smoothed out with Universal Credit.

The Chair thanked the officer.

67 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, Councillor Charles Gerrish updated the Panel on what he and senior officers are currently working on:

- Budget;
- Internal reviews – currently Adult Services;
- HR Service Peer Review – end April;
- Universal Credit;
- Property Company – the first board meeting is next week. There are early pre-application discussions with the planning department regarding flats.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

In response to a query from Councillor Barrett, the Cabinet Member explained that affordable housing criteria would apply to any development built by the Council Property Company. In response to a question from Councillor Goodman, Councillor Gerrish explained that while some units may be sold, the site will not.

Regarding a query from Councillor Hale, the Cabinet Member replied that the Council cannot operate as a social housing landlord as this has been passed to Curo.

Councillor Furse explained that there is a dilemma between building social housing (for which there is a strong demand) and commercial concerns. The Cabinet Member explained that there is shortage of property to rent and hopefully the Property Company will manage this demand. He explained that it is hoped that the availability of these houses may bring some people out of the rental sector.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member.

68 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the future workplan with the following suggested additions:

- Councillor Furse requested an update report on all the 'to be confirmed' items in the budget report to keep the Panel informed. The Cabinet Member agreed

that this is a reasonable request and suggested **July 2016** for a report 'Management Restructuring Review';

- Councillor Barrett reported that he had had meetings with Richard Holroyd regarding agency staff and there would be a report in **July 2016**.
- Council Connect Update – 6 months.

The meeting ended at 6.35 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services