

MINUTES

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 02 FEBRUARY 2022

Present:

Councillors:

Adeleke
Durrant
Imarni (Chair)
Johnson
Mahmood
Freedman

Portfolio Holders:

Councillor Banks (Community & Regulatory)
Councillor Griffiths (Housing)

Officers:

N Beresford
F Jump
L Warden
S Turner
Group Manager Strategic Housing
Group Manager Financial Services
Group Manager Communities
PA to the Corporate Directors (minutes)

HC/001/22 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 1 December 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

HC/002/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were given by Cllr Hollinghurst, Cllr Barry-Mears, Cllr Ransley, Cllr Bassadone, Cllr Pringle, Cllr Oguchi

HC/003/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

HC/004/22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

**HC/005/22 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE
COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO A CALL-IN**

Chairman:

None.

HC/006/22 CUSTOMER STRATEGY UPDATE

J. Nason presented the work undertaken to develop the Customer Strategy and the proposal to request the budget to progress this work and for the role of Head of Transformation. J Nason advised that the work was undertaken by a management consultancy working alongside officers across the Council to analyse work provided and how customers engage. Workshops were then held with officers to map out processes and identify areas for improvement.

J Nason advised that the key driver is to embed the vision across Dacorum Borough Council and put the customer at the centre of its services to provide a positive and effective experience as well as empower staff to deliver consistent and quality services. It also looks to align the organisation, deliver on priorities, build on agile practices, maximise existing and new technologies, and build financial security.

The report identified digital interaction with the Council as very low with most interactions via telephone and the analysis sets out a strong case for changing the strategies and requirements around these systems.

J Nason advised that Phase 2 looks at implementing the Strategy to ensure it is embedded across the organisation and map out customer journeys by making improvements identified as part of Phase 1. Phase 2 will also look at technology and identifying a management system that can allow 1 single record of the customer. The paper also sets out a need for a Head of Transformation, a 2-year fixed term post to oversee delivery of the transformation programme.

Cllr Freedman commented that the analysis highlights current issues but doesn't provide much detail on how to change it, and that he would like to see a record of what customer contact has been made. J Nason explained that a Customer Relationship Management system would enable them to do this and allow customers and officers to identify who was spoken to when and what information was provided. The CRM system will be part of Phase 2 and help resolve customer queries.

Cllr Harden noted 2 error messages on page 71 in section 4.1 and page 73 in section 5.

Cllr Harden commented on section 3 and queried how correspondence with MPs compares to correspondence with Councillors. J Nason confirmed that she did not have this information and would look into this.

Cllr Harden noted the reference to 'internal customers' and asked how Members can be more streamlined in being dealt with. J Nason advised that this could be included as part of Phase 2 and that they could categorise this in terms of the CRM system or have a dedicated contact with an aggregated and centralised officer staff pool to ensure just 1 point of contact.

Cllr Harden queried the 'Response Once' scenario and how this expertise would be brought to CSU. J Nason explained that they would look to learn from enquiries and have banks of information available online. This will be facilitated by having the right technology in place and ensuring that the information on the website is easily digestible so that as many customers as possible can self-serve.

Chairman:

Cllr Adeleke queried if the completion of Phase 2 will result in new jobs or a reduction of staff, and if it would provide any financial savings. J Nason responded that she couldn't confirm if consolidating their IT systems into 1 place would result in new jobs though it is assumed there would be a financial saving as they will no longer be paying the licences or managing the oversight and maintenance of 9 systems.

Cllr Adeleke asked if the Head of Transformation role is part of the overall revamp or is an additional role. J Nason confirmed that the role is part of the Chief Executive's tier 3 structural proposals. C Hamilton added that the proposal is to fund the role through reserves for a 2-year fixed term period and would oversee significant transformation projects including the Housing Action Plan, the Waste Services Transformation, the Customer Services Transformation, and the establishment of a Project Management Officer.

Cllr Suqlain Mahmood noted the £180k budget and asked if this included the budget for the consultant. J Nason confirmed that any consultancy work would be separate and that the budget is requested as a draw down for reserves. Cllr Suqlain Mahmood commented that the Head of Transformation role will require an understanding of all the Council's services and suggested it would be too much for 1 person. C Hamilton advised that the role requires a particular set of skills that they are most likely to find via a fixed term contract and that they will be looking for someone who has done a similar role with other local authorities.

Cllr Suqlain Mahmood commented on the data as presented on page 17 of the report and suggested that customers be provided with a unique number to allow the Council and customer to track their contact. C Hamilton agreed, stating that this will free up officer time and allow them to instead focus on more complex issues. C Hamilton added that by streamlining contact options, customer satisfaction should improve and officer resources will be freed up. Cllr Griffiths added that they could keep the same number of staff but save money as staff could instead focus on more complex issues.

Cllr Suqlain Mahmood queried if they could look to save time and workload by implementing AI and noted support of the report. Cllr Imarni agreed that the use of a chat box would be beneficial.

Cllr Johnson asked if staff would be consulted. J Nason confirmed that both staff and residents would be involved and that workshops were held with key members of staff. During Phase 2, all parts of the business will be engaged with to ensure the outcome meets the businesses' needs.

Cllr Adeleke queried when the new policy and strategy would be rolled out. J Nason advised that the proposed implementation is over 18 months, including buying and implanting the new IT system, though they are looking to implement the strategy by this summer.

Cllr Imarni commented on the current phone system and issues with the voice recognition, stating that it's frustrating and time consuming. Cllr Imarni continued that the pandemic has changed consumer attitudes and asked if the increase in digital technology would work in Dacorum. J Nason responded that she felt Dacorum is Internet-enabled and that the strategy picks up on the needs of those who are not as tech-savvy, speak English as a second language, or require more face-to-face interactions.

Chairman:

Cllr Imarni asked that Dacorum's website also be looked at to allow for easier navigation. Cllr Adeleke added that they need to streamline the number of options available for customers to choose from

Action points:

- **J Nason to look into amount of correspondence with MPs compared with Councillors.**

HC/007/22 WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Imarni stated that Councillors could submit any questions to be considered via email.

HC/008/22 ACTION POINTS

Cllr Imarni stated that all outstanding questions had been addressed.

Cllr Imarni noted apologies from Cllr Pringle, Cllr Hollinghurst, Cllr Ransley and Cllr Barry-Mears.

There being no further business, Cllr Imarni closed the meeting.

Chairman: