

## **SCRUTINY**

**MONDAY, 23 APRIL 2018**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Robert Wright (Chair), Claire Ellis, Mary Friend, Dale Heenan, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Gary Sumner, Timothy Swinyard, Vera Tomlinson and Chris Watts.

Also in attendance were: Councillor Brian Ford (Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care) and Councillor Keith Williams (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Digitalisation and Lydiard House and Park).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ray Ballman, Mark Dempsey, Emma Faramarzi (Vice-Chair), Kevin Parry and James Robbins.

### **74. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Tim Swinyard made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 5 (Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Digitalisation and Lydiard House and Park) as he is a member of the Lydiard Park Heritage Trust Advisory Group.

### **75. Public Question Time**

Mr Roy Worman, Haydon Wick resident, asked questions regarding Council services, specifically:

- a) The reasons behind the increased length of time now being taken to answer Customer Service telephone calls, and plans to improve this service area.
- b) The plans to improve the physical space of the One Stop Shop, and the timescale within which the improvements will be made.
- c) Who the contact point is within the Council that community organisations can liaise with regarding community safety partnership schemes.

Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Digitalisation and Lydiard House and Park, responded to Mr Worman's questions at the meeting.

### **76. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **77. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session - Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Digitalisation and Lydiard House and Park**

Lydiard House and Park, was in attendance and presented to the Committee a report summarising progress and performance in respect of each of the following service areas within his portfolio of responsibility:

- Digital by Design
- IT Strategy and delivery

- Emergency Planning
- Member Development
- Human Resources, Personnel & Trades Union Relations, Equalities.
- Schools HR
- Human Resources, Personnel & Trades The Council's Change Programme including Stronger Together
- Risk Management
- Customer Access strategy, including Customer Services and the One Stop Shop
- Health and Safety
- Operational Buildings and Property
- Corporate Performance Management
- Customer Services, including the One Stop Shop

Councillor Williams responded to the observations and questions put by Councillors Claire Ellis, Mary Friend, Dale Heenan, Gemma McCracken, Des Moffatt, Chris Watts and the Chair on the following matters:

- How staffing numbers have increased within the telephony service, improving on being 33% lower than twelve months ago, but also that knowledge and expertise has been lost due to the high turnover of staff.
- Conducting exit interviews to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the high turnover of call centre staff.
- Planned service improvements for the estimated 20% of residents who will maintain telephony as their primary means of contacting the Council.
- Improvements planned to the customer services system, which marks queries as 'closed' when passed to an officer, and therefore appears to residents and councillors as unresolved.
- The capability of the recently purchased telephony system to automate conversations, and generate user logs, which would help address digital literacy challenges.
- The plans for rationalising the various systems used by officers throughout the Council to log user queries.
- The development of an IT Strategy, against which progress can be measured.
- How decisions on the evolution and improvement of IT systems will be put before Cabinet.
- The adaption of lone working cameras and other digital solutions to allow the reporting of street cleaning issues by officers.
- The need to ensure that those parish councils which have taken over street cleaning services are involved in any solution.
- The planned timescale for introducing the use of 'Chat Box', which is a simple, scalable solution for businesses to communicate with customers.
- How the current response from customer services is to tell members to contact a parish council directly, and that a better experience would be provided if customer services referred the query on the members' behalf.
- The benefits realised so far from the processes which have been transferred online.
- How the IT Department can make improvements to raise its 'mid performer' ranking by the Society of IT Management.
- Extrapolating information from the last twelve months to identify why the number of calls to the Council going unanswered has increased.

- Improvements to the user experience by the addition of reference numbers on queries logged through the customer portal, to enable a search matrix to operate and easier cross referencing amongst databases.
- Contingency plans for the Revenues and Benefits service in the instance of Capita being unable to fulfil its contractual obligations.
- The new CCTV monitoring system rolled out across the Borough.
- The reasoning for the recent transfer of portfolio responsibility for Lydiard Park and House to Cllr Williams.
- Resolving the issues amongst interested parties over the amount of funding required for investment in Lydiard Park and House, and the independent surveys that have been commissioned on the property.
- Proposals for improving the commercial services on offer at Lydiard House and Park.
- The transfer of Lydiard House and Park staff from Chartridge to Swindon Borough Council.
- The lessons learnt from previous commercialisation ventures and how they feed in to reviewing the approach of the Council towards the management of Lydiard House and Park.
- The monitoring and management of sickness absence within the Council.
- The responsibility for auditing and delivering on health and safety issues at the Council.
- The reasons behind the recent rise in absence rates at the Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Resolved – That Councillor Williams be thanked for attending the meeting to present his performance report and for his full and open responses to members' questions and observations on the issues raised.

## **78. Work Programme 2017/2018**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the topics for inclusion in the 2017/2018 Scrutiny Work Programme, as agreed by the Committee at its meetings on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017, and updated during the course of the Municipal Year.

The Chair provided an update with regard to the reports expected to be submitted to future meetings of the Committee on (i) the outsourcing of services and (ii) Policing in Swindon.

## **79. Status of Requests for Action and / or Information**

The Committee received an updated report advising on the status of outstanding issues and member requests for information.

Resolved – That the report on the status of outstanding issues and member requests for information be noted.