

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) held
at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 7 July 2021
Note: This meeting was not held as a public meeting in accordance with the Local
Government Act 1972

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair)
Councillor B Gittins
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor R Lakha
Councillor K Maton
Councillor B Mosterman
Councillor T Sawdon

Other Members: Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources
Councillor Hetherton, Cabinet Member for City Services
Councillor Lloyd, Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services

Employees:

D Ashmore, Director of Housing and Transformation
A Bellingeri, Customer and Business Services
V Castree, Law and Governance
M Greenwood, Business Systems and Improvement
G Griffiths, ICT and Digital
C Sinclair, Law and Governance

Apologies: Councillor J Blundell

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2021 and the joint meeting with the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on 23 March 2021 were noted. There were no matters arising.

3. Digital First Programme

The Board received a presentation and considered a briefing note which provided information on the Digital First programme including an update on the main activities undertaken, an overview of the digital service and infrastructure improvements and details of the next phase of the programme.

The Digital First programme formed part of the Council's One Coventry Transformation programme, which aimed to deliver the Council's One Coventry ambitions. The programme tests and develops new digital services and ways of working and focusses on enabling council services, communities and the workforce to benefit from digital innovations and improvements.

The programme was working to delivery digital improvement projects at varying scales, from specific service initiatives through to large scale integrated city-wide programmes and aimed to deliver the ambitions of the One Coventry approach and the Council's Digital Strategy.

The Board discussed a number of matters arising from the presentation including:

- How to improve and widen digital accessibility for the public
- Ways to improve how the Council communicates the digital services offer
- The need for Councillors to quickly be able to find which officer they need to speak to in respect of their casework duties
- The benefits of remote and hybrid meetings in terms of accessibility
- The development of the Web Chat facility

The Chair summarised progress of the City Council's digital transformation over recent years, observing that there were many similarities in the Board's previous recommendations to widen digital engagement with the community, for instance, in respect of listening to what users want and looking at making life easier for the customer to engage with the Council. The Chair commented that, although some progress had been made, there remained a need to speed up the modernising process. In response, it was acknowledged that there had been some challenges, but these were being overcome and further discussions would continue to be undertaken with Members, particularly in respect of digital inclusion.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- **Note the update on the Digital First Programme**
- **Ask that officers investigate ways to improve the resident/Member experience regarding public contacts with the Council including ease of accessing follow-up actions after the first contact and, for Members, ease of finding the appropriate officer contact details.**
- **Ask officers to look at developing a strategy to communicate, on a regular basis, the message that Councillors' understand the difficulties and will work with residents on the wide-ranging digital challenges that many experience.**
- **Receive a further report on digital inclusion later in the year.**

4. **Customer Services**

The Board received a presentation and considered a briefing note which provided an insight into the Customer Services function throughout the pandemic; the additional activity that continues to be undertaken and the 'business as usual' performance during that time and highlighted the learning from recent months, demonstrating how that will be used to continue to evolve the service.

Customer Services supported the delivery of support and advice through telephone-based teams, face to face outlets and other digital channels. Alongside that, it had responsibility for the provision of organisational support through administration, Executive Support and Digital Print and Mail.

The pandemic necessitated a fundamental change in the way that services worked to continue to enable customers to access service provision and support the organisation in the provision of core functionality.

The Board noted that while much of the 'business as usual' activity was retained during this time, the service undertook more of an enabling role working with colleagues across the organisation and beyond to achieve positive outcomes for the residents of the City. The learning from this has helped to shape the future role of the service.

The Board discussed a number of matters arising from the presentation including:

- Community pilot schemes for IT support/training for local residents
- Duration of call wait times

In noting the report, the Board requested to receive a further update on this later in the year.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- **Note the update on Customer Services through the pandemic, additional activity undertaken and business as usual performance.**
- **Receive a further report on Customer Services later in the year.**

5. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues

The Board noted the Work Programme which would be updated to include the addition of further reports on Digital Inclusion and Customer Services, as referred to in Minute 3 and 4 above, to be received later in the year.

6. Any other items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.15 pm)