

POLICY SCRUTINY PANEL

9th May, 2006, at 5.30pm

Present: Councillors Simmons (in the Chair) and Councillors Cowper, Freeman, Gill, Hepplewhite, Moderate, Norman, Pitts, Syer and Thomson.

Also Present: Councillors Colledge, Howarth, Kellett, Kinghorn, Leake, Marsden, McDonnell, Pape and Robinson.

Apologies for Absence: Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr. Walker.

Bullet Points from the Meeting of 4th April, 2006

The Bullet Points from the Meeting held on 4th April, 2006, were approved as a correct record.

BULLET POINTS

Telephone Communications System

Utilisation of Voicemail Facility

- The Head of HR was in attendance to address the concerns of Members regarding the utilisation of Voicemail.
- Members were informed that there was no written procedure in relation to how staff should deal with voicemail messages and that it was incumbent upon Managers to ensure that their staff responded appropriately to them.
- The Head of HR indicated that a brief survey of OMT had shown that only two specific complaints had been received from Members and requested Members to forward any complaints that they had regarding either general Service Areas or specific Officers, directly to Directors or Heads of Service, to enable them to be dealt with appropriately.
- Members subsequently identified specific Service Areas where they had encountered particular problems.
- Members also indicated that their enquiries were responded to more quickly when mobile telephone contact numbers were available.

NB Cllr. Moderate joined the Meeting at 5.34pm

- Members also queried whether the Key Contacts Directory was complete as there seemed to be out of date contact details contained within it and suggested that an audit of the Directory be carried out as soon as possible in order to identify and remove incorrect information.
- It was further considered that the Key Contacts Directory should contain a simple alphabetical list of staff with their contact details.
- Out of date voicemail greetings were also commented upon and the Head of HR indicated that this had already been raised at OMT and would be dealt with by Managers.
- Members indicated that in some Service Areas voicemail seemed to be utilised when call redirection could be more successful however an instance was quoted where a member of staff had allowed a call to go to voicemail when in a position to respond to the call.

- The Head of HR indicated that he needed information from Members to enable him to take action in any instance such as this.
- It was considered that a "Good Practice Guide" in relation to responding to telephone calls and the utilisation of voicemail should be drawn up and published.
- Members also requested that the possibility of automatic diversion of calls to mobile numbers be investigated where this is possible.
- The Head of Community Services indicated that Cityinfo take "ownership" of calls and carry out follow up of calls and voicemail messages. Members noted however that there were instances when Members and the public have difficulty getting a response from an appropriate and/or experienced Officer.

Customer Consultation/Feedback

- The Customer Services Manager indicated that currently, feedback is sought by satisfaction survey, which is carried out face to face.
- Survey Forms are available to the public at Cityinfo desks and members of the public can complete them there, or take them away with a return envelope.
- Over the past six months a total of 188 questionnaires have been returned showing a satisfaction rating of 80%. Statistical information and a graph showing the results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey carried out between October 2005 and March 2006, were circulated by the Customer Services Manager.
- The face to face feedback relates to the Customer Services experience generally and not specifically to the Telephone Communications System, although some follow up satisfaction sampling is currently carried out in relation to telephone enquiries and procedure notes for Cityinfo staff carrying out the sampling have been prepared and were circulated to Members for information.
- The Head of Community Services acknowledged that further Consultation/Feedback was needed with regard to the Telephone Communications System but indicated that a balanced approach to all Customer Consultation was necessary.
- Feedback received from the public currently goes to the Head of Community Services and then, in conjunction with individual Officers, it is decided how best to utilise the information returned.
- Members suggested that specific targets be set so that they can be incorporated into a framework against which performance and progress can be monitored.
- The Head of Community Services indicated that the best practice standards against which to measure performance were Speed, Efficiency and Courtesy and this was the current aim, however the first draft of a Consultation Document was currently being produced which would address Customer Care issues generally.

Parish Council Relations

- This topic had been allocated to the Panel by the Scrutiny Committee on 18th April, 2006
- A draft Scrutiny Planning Document had been prepared and was circulated to Panel Members.
- The Chairman requested Panel Members to give consideration to the draft document before discussion at the next Panel Meeting.

- Any suggestions for amendments/additions to the suggested scope of the Scrutiny could be forwarded to Democratic Support before despatch of the agenda for the next meeting.

The Meeting Terminated at 6.15pm