

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 1 November 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor R Crute (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Patterson (Vice-Chairman), E Adam, A Batey, R Bell, D Boyes, P Jopling, C Martin, O Milburn, L Pounder, A Shield, H Smith, F Tinsley, J Turnbull, M Wilkes and A Willis

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Chaplow, M Clarke, K Hawley, H Liddle, L Maddison, J Makepeace, C Potts, J Robinson, J Rowlandson and M Simmons

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members present.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

With regards to matters arising, the Head of Strategy confirmed the following;

Minute no. 3;

- A written response with MTFP feedback had been sent to the Deputy Leader.

Minute no. 7;

- The Customer Services Manager would be attending the next meeting and would touch upon the tree policy within the Customer Feedback report.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarters 1 & 2 - 2018/19

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought to inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) ('RIPA') during the period 1 April 2018 and 30 June 2018 (Quarter 1) and 1 July 2018 and 30 September 2018 (Quarter 2) to ensure that it was being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

- (i) That the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 April 2018 until 30 June 2018 and 1 July 2018 until 1 September 2018, be received.
- (ii) That the use of RIPA was consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose, be noted.

6 Update on the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 8

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided confirmation that the 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP8) had been successfully delivered (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transformation reported that the savings target for MTFP8 was £15 million and up to the end of June 2018 £11 million had been achieved, bringing the overall savings target from 2011/12 to 2020/21 to £250 million.

The report went on to provide details relating to HR implications and data regarding staff leaving through ER/VR during the quarter. Forty one ER/VR applications had been accepted in the first quarter of 2018/19, making a total of 1,555 since 2011.

Councillor Wilkes asked if there was money left in the budget if savings were on target and being made early. The Head of Transformation explained that at the end of quarter one 74% of savings had been made and that savings were made in advance of the financial year to come. He advised that by 1 April savings should have already been made against the budget. He further reported that savings would be included in the quarterly financial report.

Referring to Business Rates Retention, Councillor Tinsley said that the rateable value could have potential major implications for the council. The Head of Transformation advised that the Finances Team were modelling all possible scenarios and that this could be wrapped up within the Fair Funding Review.

The Chairman commented that the biggest threats were Business Rates Retention, Fair Funding and Public Health.

Councillor Bell commented that it was good to be on track with the savings and looked forward to having discussions on the December budget report, especially if further savings would be required.

With regards to the 41 ER/VR applications Councillor Shield asked how many of those employees had been re-employed with a different contract of employment. He had concerns about this double dipping. The Head of Transformation assured him that it was not the council's policy to reemploy but would feedback on figures.

Councillor Jopling was assured that any earmarked reserves would be spent on what the funding was intended for.

Councillors Martin and Wilkes queried when Scrutiny would see the budget outturn reports which were considered at Cabinet. This had been raised at a previous COSMB. They were advised that a response to their query would be provided in due course.

Councillor Bell commented that some funding from central government was erratic and could not be fed into the budget when arriving so late in the process. He understood that this contributed to the difficulty of managing the budget and our finances and it this kept happening when did it become a recurring grant.

Resolved: That the content of the report and the progress made in delivering MTFP 8 be noted.

7 Customer Relations Management System (CRMS)

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships that gave an update on progress made against the recommendations from the review of the Customer Relations Management System (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Digital and Customer Services gave a detailed presentation that highlighted:

- CRM Purpose
 - Priorities
 - Improved Choice
 - Customer Portal
 - Key Facts
 - Service Request Channel Transition
- Customer Insight and Feedback
 - Customers
 - Management Dashboards
 - Customer Satisfaction – Contact
 - Customer Satisfaction – Service
- Value for Money
 - Key Facts
 - Front Line Delivery
- Members Portal
 - Overview
 - Interactive Dashboard

Councillor Batey was pleased with the way the system looked. With regards to the statistics plotted she commented how many were due to the beast from the east rather than garden waste issues. She asked what happened during bank holiday periods and when offices were closed. She said that it was important for people to have out of hours contact and asked how this was managed. The Head of Digital and Customer Services explained that this would depend on the way the individual services operated out of hours. Neighbourhood Wardens, for example, worked much longer than office hours and complaints/issues could be reported directly to the warden when the offices were closed. Usually during bank holidays and extended closures the public would be told when requests would be actioned. There was also a texting service that could be used for those customers who had given their permission to contact them in this way. He added that lessons had been learnt during the beast from the east as the weather changed so quickly that communications did not get out quickly enough.

Councillor Batey went on to ask if there was a minimum age for young people to use the system as she would like to offer an incentive for them to self report any issues. She also asked if there was comparable information available on the database that could be shared. The Head of Digital and Customer Services would find out about the minimum age query and report back. With regards to the shared database, he confirmed that this was available to Heads of Service and could be broken down by electoral division.

Councillor Adam pointed out that there wasn't a huge decrease in the amount of people using the telephone system from October 2016 to July 2018, 48% to 37% and asked if there was a reason that people still used the telephone. The Head of Digital and Customer Services said that customer feedback shows that some people preferred this method and felt that their issues would be dealt with more quickly than if they used online contact. There were a small number of people who did not have access to enable them to utilise the online service.

Councillor Adam went on to say that he had been involved in the pilot of the Members portal and he asked if they would still receive an e-mail saying a complaint was closed when it wasn't. He also asked about the process when reporting on behalf of a resident. The Head of Digital and Customer Services explained that there would be a lot more detail included in the notes about why a complaint had closed in future and in the e-mails sent. When complaining on behalf of someone else, he went on to explain that the response would be sent to the resident and copied into the Members portal.

Councillor Turnbull enquired if there was an option to use an app on a mobile telephone, and was advised that there was a live app currently for students and one to go live regarding swimming. The Head of Digital and Customer Services explained that all decisions were 'data driven', from what people wanted. As most people only used the online forms once or twice a year then they probably would not want to use space up on their mobile for an app. He added that the idea had not been dismissed and the service were moving toward making everything mobile enabled.

With regards to issues going straight to an operative, Councillor Bell was concerned that the employee would become overloaded with work. It was confirmed that the Team Manager had visibility of requests.

Councillor Wilkes suggested that uploading photographs to the system should be considered as sometimes staff can't find the right area being reported, especially if more than one complaint had been lodged in a particular area. Having a photograph available would help the member of staff identify the area in question. Councillor Wilkes went on to report the amount of times an error message was received when trying to log on to the County Council's website. He said that this was a repeat problem and asked if some of the logon features could be investigated especially when having to logon twice. The Head of Digital and Customer Services explained that the Council Tax system was managed by a separate supplier hence having to logon twice. However, he did recognise the interface issues.

Referring to amount of money spent on consultations, Councillor Tinsley asked how we gain permission to contact people whose details we already held. He went on to ask about how we benchmarked against other authorities with the choice of contact available. The Head of Digital and Customer Services said that it was difficult to compare as every Council has a different offer. Durham County Council had a generous telephony service and face to face centres. Comparing the offer available he went to report that ours was good. With regards to data some residents had given us permission to use their information however this was only used for surveys at present.

The Chairman said that it would be interesting to see this information fed back through the regular customer feedback reports. He also requested that information about access to computers for rural and deprived areas be fed back to committee.

Councillor Shield asked that when a complaint was received and follow up was required who decides to send to a particular team and was there a level of continuity. He was advised that the service team made the decision about the appropriate person to deal with a complaint. The Team Manager has an overall view and would make the decision before being sent to frontline staff.

Referring to duplicate complaints, Councillor Shield asked how the service could ensure that repeat complaints were linked. The Head of Digital and Customer Services explained that this was a target area for the team to reduce avoidable contact and in future when a customer reported an issue it would be made obvious if a further complaint was received for the same area, e.g. by using a pin-drop on a map.

Going back to a point made by Councillor Wilkes about using photographs on the system, Councillor Batey added that this would be a welcome addition especially when reporting fly tipping.

Councillor Patterson welcomed the online portal and asked if the number of requests had increased overall. The Head of Digital and Customer Services said that people were using the system more now that the online option was available. The team were looking at the data and would track any changes.

The Chairman thanked the Members for their questions and comments and said that he would expect to see feedback within the customer feedback reports.

In summary, the Head of Strategy confirmed that the Members portal would be launched within the next few weeks. The Head of Strategy confirmed that an update report could come back to committee.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

8 County Durham Partnership Update

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which updated Members on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP) including the board, the five thematic partnerships and all area action partnerships (AAPs). The report also included updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Manager Partnerships highlighted the work of a Think Family approach across children and adults services, the Ministry of Justice Gold Award received for Armed Services work, and the prevention at scale work in relation to mental health. The Committee were also informed that the council had signed up to a Modern Slavery charter.

The Chairman referred to the draft of the County Durham Vision and suggested it come back to scrutiny before being launched. The Strategic Manager Partnerships confirmed that consultation will take place with Overview and Scrutiny once the emerging findings had been produced .

Further to a comment from Councillor Wilkes about the layout of the report and making it easier to read, the Strategic Manager Partnerships advised that she would be reviewing the layout of the report and would take on board his comments. The Chairman had found the report helpful being under the 'Altogether' headings.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

9 Notice of Key Decisions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided a list of key decisions that was scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved: That the content of the report and update be noted.

10 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided an information update of overview and scrutiny activity from 14 September to November 2018 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.