

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY 30 OCTOBER 2012 FROM 7:00PM TO 7:30PM**

Present:- Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Parry Batth, Chris Bowring, Kate Haines (substituting for Norman Jorgensen), Ken Miall and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

*Also present:-
Susan Coulter, Senior Democratic Services Officer.*

PART I

28. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 20 March 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- Page 1 – last bullet point – delete “would be” on the second line; and
- Page 2 – second bullet point – the word “for” change to “format”.

29. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Norman Jorgensen.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

32. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

33. IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE (WHITEHALL BUSINESS PLAN)

Members considered a report on Improving the Customer Experience (Whitehall Business Plan) set out on Agenda page 4.

The Panel was advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 13 June, had asked the Panel to give some consideration to the Whitehall Business Plan. It was suggested that the Panel might want to look at the different channels for interacting with customers (e.g. websites, online services) and examine what the Council is doing in response to the Government’s Channel Strategy, particularly with regard to the access to services by vulnerable customers.

The Panel was advised that a joint working group of Members (administration and opposition) and officers had been established to address the “improving customer experience” priority set when the Council published its vision earlier this year. Whilst the working group would not be looking explicitly at the Whitehall Business Plan, within its terms of reference it would be considering how different customer channels (particularly the web and social media) could be used to help improve the customer experience. The joint working group is scheduled to meet for the first time in November and will be jointly chaired by the Lead Member for Internal Services and the Strategic Director Children’s Services. The results of this work will be considered by the Council’s Executive.

The Panel was further advised that the working group welcomed the support and input of the Panel with this work. In terms of the next steps, the joint working group will, by Christmas, have defined the particular aspects of its work which would benefit from input from the Panel. This will be discussed and agreed with the Chairman of the Panel by early 2013, at the latest.

Members discussed communicating with customers as follows:

- only around 5% of customers were interested in what the Council did so it was important to engage the other 95% and involve them in what the council did;
- social media such as Facebook and Twitter should be used more widely when dealing with customers;
- when residents are registering for council tax and on the electoral roll, the Council should ask for their e-mail and mobile phone details so that texts and e-mails can be sent to update people on what the Council is doing; This would also be a greener way of communicating with customers;
- Sky Television has a community channel and the Council could use something similar to engage the community.

Members also advised that Bracknell Forest Council had two strategies; a customer based one and a strategy in line with the Government's Channel Strategy. It was suggested that discussions be undertaken with neighbouring authorities to see how they are improving their communication with their customers.

The Panel advised that the Council needed to make its services known to its customers. This may mean publicising services better and requesting information from some services that are funded by the Council, such as Readibus and Keep Mobile.

The Panel was advised that in the Shinfield North Ward, a council flat had been turned into a community flat, which Members felt was an excellent way to reach out to vulnerable people. Shinfield North Ward also held "Gazebo days" where officers from Tenant Services visited the area and met the residents. This had proven to be very successful in that particular Ward.

Members also felt that a good way to promote the Borough Council's services was to use the Town and Parish Councils more.

Members were concerned that any information displayed in the libraries should be kept up to date.

The Panel stressed that as the Joint Working Group had not yet defined the particular aspects of its work, the Panel could not ascertain what work the Joint Working Group would be undertaking and this made it difficult for the Panel to have any meaningful input at this stage. The Panel therefore requested that the Joint Working Group present a further report to its meeting in January 2013 giving details of the work it is undertaking in order to allow the Panel to have a meaningful input into that work.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) taking into account the discussions set out above, the Joint Working Group present a further report to the Panel at its meeting in January 2013 giving details of the work it is undertaking in order to allow the Panel to have a meaningful input into that work; and

2) the report be noted.

34. PANEL FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Panel considered its work programme set on Agenda pages 5 to 7 and requested that an item on Improving the Customer Experience (Whitehall Business Plan) be added to the work programme for January 2013.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) an item on Improving the Customer Experience (Whitehall Business Plan) be added to the work programme for January 2013; and
- 2) the Forward Programme be updated accordingly.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

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