



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8th OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor T Jay (Chair), Councillors B Price (Vice-Chair), R Bilcliff, R Claymore, R Ford, S Goodall, Dr S People, P Standen and M Summers

The following officers were present: Zoe Wolicki (Assistant Director People), Michael Buckland (Head of Revenues) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

36 APOLOGIES AND ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Vice-Chair reported that as the Chair was expected to arrive late to the meeting, he would initially take the Chair. Accordingly he suggested that the agenda order be amended such that items 7 (Working Group Updates) and 10 (Garage Sites) were considered later in the agenda and item 9 (Customer Portal Update) was considered earlier.

In accordance with Rule 9.1.3 (to change the order of business on the agenda) the Committee resolved to change the order of the business as set out in the minutes.

(Moved by Councillor P Standen and seconded by S Goodall).

No further apologies were received.

37 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th August 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor R Ford and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

39 CHAIR'S UPDATE

It was reported that there were no further items to report which were not already covered under later items on the agenda.

40 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Vice-Chair reported that Cabinet had agreed with the Committee's recommendation to issue a letter to Ministers co-signed by Councillor D Cook and Councillor Dr S People regarding waiting times for Universal Credit and that the recommendation had been completed.

The Vice-Chair reported that recommendations from this Committee on Member Induction had been received and noted by Cabinet on 26 September 2019 and that Cabinet had resolved that this Committee, in liaison with Members and Democratic Services, continue to oversee implementation of Member training.

41 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET / COUNCIL

None.

42 CUSTOMER PORTAL UPDATE

The Committee received the Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance which updated members on the progress to date in respect of the Customer Portal and Customer Relationship Management system, which was presented by the Assistant Director, People and the Head of Revenues.

The Head of Revenues reported that the Customer Portal was initially due to be in operation in May 2019, however, the Council was notified that the Staffordshire wide CRM system (Lagan) was to be decommissioned by the end of September 2019, and therefore priority was given to implementing the CRM element of the project by the end of September 2019. It was reported that the Lagan system was decommissioned and replaced with the Civica CRM on 27 September 2019.

The Head of Revenues reported that work had continued on development of the portal alongside the implementation of the CRM and that development of the following three processes was underway with implementation expected by the end of 2019:

- Moving in moving out
- Single person discount
- Safeguarding

The Head of Revenues reported that the development of an online housing applications form would not be developed by Civica but would instead be developed by Orchard as this solution was expected to provide a process which fully integrated into the back office system and the Customer Portal.

Following the appointment of a new Head of Customer Experience it was reported that the Head of Revenues would hand over responsibility for leading the project.

The Committee members sought clarification in the following areas:

- **Accessibility** – the Committee sought and received confirmation that notwithstanding the implementation of a digital customer portal, there would remain face to face and telephone channels for customers who preferred to access Council services in this way.
- **Post implementation review** – it was planned to have a post implementation review in early 2020 once the implementation of the three processes above had been completed.
- **Business continuity** – it was reported that the Council had full business continuity plans across all departments.
- **Testing of the systems** – the Committee requested details as to how the new systems were being tested. The Head of Revenues reported that staff were testing the systems. The Committee considered that relying on testing by staff only would not necessarily highlight potential flaws in the system as staff would be likely to have a different level of knowledge of the systems from the average customer which could mean that issues would not be identified. The Committee considered that it would be appropriate to explore the option of making the system available in test mode to customers together with a clear reporting mechanism where any issues identified could be reported to the Council. It was further reported that we had been liaising with other Councils to understand their experience of implementing the system and any lessons learnt.
- **Budgetary requirements** – it was reported that the capital budget of £115,000 had been utilised and that there would be a £18,000 fee annually for support, maintenance and upgrades. There would be further costs which would require further budgetary provision, however, for any additional functionality required. The Committee considered that it would be important to ensure that the further budgetary requirements were identified and fed into the budget setting process as early as possible to support the continued development of the system.

Councillor T Jay joined the meeting at 6.30pm and took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

- **Timelines** – the Committee requested further details on the timelines expected for the roll-out of the rest of the work-streams of the project. It was reported that, following implementation of the three processes highlighted above, the next areas to be developed and the anticipated timelines were:
 - Revenues – for implementation by April 2020
 - Online housing application form – for implementation by December 2020
 - Benefits – during 2021.
- **Resources** – the Committee sought clarification of the resources, including in terms of staff skillsets, available to support the implementation of all the work-streams and received assurances that the skillsets together with appropriate training existed and would be implemented to ensure that there was appropriately skilled resources to support the move into more digital platforms.

- **IT Robustness** – with the implementation of more internet based solutions and services, the Committee sought clarification on the penetration testing undertaken. The Assistant Director, People reported that the Head of Technology and Information Services had responsibility for this area and that penetration testing would extend to the customer portal.
- **Single and High Priority notification** – the Committee sought and received confirmation that the system would be designed to simplify the notification process by customers, and allow one simplified notification which would be forwarded to all relevant areas of the Council. Also, to ensure that high priority / urgent requests were considered first in the work queues. The Committee suggested utilising a key word search functionality for this. The Head of Revenues agreed to check whether the system would have a key word search functionality.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be endorsed;

that the Committee considered that extended testing, involving members of the public, be undertaken in addition to testing by staff members.

(Moved by Councillor M Summers and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

43 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

The Chair reported that he had met with the Executive Director, Finance and the Knowledge, Performance and Insight Co-ordinator and had received a draft QPR summary from them. The Chair advised that he would review the draft QPR and would then reconvene with the rest of the Working Group for comments.

44 2019/20 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted that a new item had been added to the Forward Plan – Future High Street Fund. The Committee requested that it either receive a written update on this item, or this item be included in the town centre item due to come to the Committee in December. The Chair agreed to check this and include in the Work Plan as appropriate before the next Committee meeting.

45 GARAGE SITES

The Chair updated the Committee on the fact that Officers were still reviewing garage sites, and that it was proposed that Garage Sites would be brought to a full Council meeting before the end of the Municipal Year.

The Committee considered that prior to any report on Garage Sites being considered by full Council, it would be appropriate for a scrutiny committee to consider the matter. It was agreed that the Chair would feedback to the Portfolio Holder the expectation that this matter be considered by scrutiny prior to full Council. It was agreed that Garage Sites remain on the Work plan for this Committee at its December meeting.

46 UPDATE FROM CFPS SYMPOSIUM ON GOVERNMENT SCRUTINY GUIDANCE

Councillor Dr S Peale provided the Committee with an update on the CfPS Symposium on Government Scrutiny Guidance which he attended in June 2019. He highlighted the following key points which the Committee could consider further, in the light of the Peer Review in 2020:

- The value of independence in the chairing of scrutiny committees and the potential to use a secret ballot to elect scrutiny chairs;
- Dealing with familial links between executive and scrutiny responsibilities, as well as dealing with issues where members move between executive and scrutiny roles;
- The value of a Scrutiny Protocol;
- Avoiding members who hold less formal executive positions sitting on scrutiny committees looking at portfolios to which those roles relate.

The Committee discussed the value of scrutiny and the importance of all members participating in scrutiny with an independent mind.

The Committee agreed that the report from Councillor Dr S Peale be noted.

47 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee discussed the Work Plan and agreed to update it as follows:

Corporate Scrutiny Work Plan

Work Plan 2019 - 2020		
TARGET MEETING DATE	SUBJECT	MEETING WHEN ITEM ADDED TO WORK PLAN
November 2019	QPR Q2 2019/20 Report	Regular item
November 2019	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy – 12 month update	
November 2019	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21 onwards	July 2019
November 2019	Review of senior management restructuring	
November 2019	Working group report on QPR Report Executive Summary	June 2019
December 2019	Asset Management Review update (including town centre) – Councillor R Pritchard to be invited	

December 2019	Town Centre Strategy update	June 2019
December 2019	Future High Streets Fund	October 2019
December 2019	Corporate investment strategy	
December 2019	Garage Sites	
February 2020	QPR Q3 2019/20 Report	Regular item
February 2020	Market tender Update	August 2019
February 2020	Member Training update	June 2019
March 2020	Member Support Working group – sub group on Member Communications	
March 2020	Review of Cabinet decisions over previous 12 month period	
March 2020	Parking Toolkit review	October 2019

Upcoming Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings

14th November 2019 (QPR Q2 focus)

5th December 2019

5th February 2020 (QPR Q3 focus)

12th March 2020

It was reported that in previous years this Committee had nominated two members to attend the Council's Tenant Consultative Group. The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate for this Committee to nominate one representative and for the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to nominate a second representative.

Chair