

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
17 DECEMBER 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Monday, 17 December 2018

PRESENT: Councillor Dave Mackie (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sean Bibby, Geoff Collett, Mared Eastwood, Dennis Hutchinson, Tudor Jones, Mike Reece, Ralph Small, Andy Williams, and David Wisinger

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors Dave Hughes (for Ian Dunbar) and Patrick Heesom (for Brian Lloyd)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets. Councillors Marion Bateman and Paul Shotton

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts, Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Housing and Assets), Chief Officer (Social Services)

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2018 were submitted.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2018 were submitted.

Accuracy

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson said he had submitted his apologies to the meeting and asked that the minutes be amended to record this.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above amendment the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. DIGITAL CUSTOMER OVERVIEW

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report to provide an update on progress and to give assurance to the Committee on the design principles underpinning the creation of a single contact centre as part of delivering the digital customer theme of the digital strategy.

The Chief Officer advised that in March 2018, Cabinet had agreed to the creation of a single Contact Centre starting initially with the joining of the Contact Centres serving Streetscene and Housing. He outlined the key objectives of the project which were to build resilience within the combined team to deal effectively with peak call/incident times, staff absence and vacancies, improve Welsh language provision, and provide customers with access to multiple services via their Customer Account.

The Chief Officer explained that as part of improving digital services the Council would upgrade the online capability of the housing software to enable tenants to link directly to their housing account details from the Flintshire Customer Account page on the Council's website, and view rent account details, repairs, applications, account information, and make payments.

The first phase of the project for a combined contact centre was being implemented with action concentrating on the amalgamation of roles in Housing and Streetscene into a common job description for contact centre agents and the appointment of a manager overseeing the single service; review and improvement of information and content on the Flintshire website for customers to find information and self-serve; and the implementation of the online Housing capability. It was planned that Phase 1 would be operational from mid March 2019, however, a review of the technical and staff position would be undertaken in advance to ensure services would be delivered with no degradation of quality as a result.

The Chief Officer reported that discussions were also taking place with other services to identify and agree the scope of services which could be transitioned into the combined contact centre at a later date. The intention was to aim for a fully combined contact centre operating from Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe, from April 2020. The Chief Officer said a further report on the Digital Strategy would be submitted to the Committee to provide an update on progress early next year. He also referred to the Digital Strategy workshop which would be held for all Members on 16 January 2019.

Councillor Geoff Collett asked if the digital strategy would be delivered on time. He also referred to the invest to save budget allocation of £550k and asked if this was a one-off or annual allocation. In response the Chief Officer explained that the programme was currently on target for mid-March next year, however, an assessment of the 'readiness' of services to go live would be undertaken in advance to ensure no disruption to services would occur. Referring to the budget allocation of £550k the Chief Officer advised that this was not an annual cost and the funding would be used to fund three key new posts for the delivery of the Digital Customer project, software, and licences.

The Chief Officer explained that costs were being tracked and monitored and the current position regarding staffing was a cost neutral or small saving to be achieved.

Councillor Tudor Jones sought assurance that a telephone service would continue to be provided in the future and spoke of the needs of elderly people who may not have access to on-line services at home. Councillor Jones also asked if a call-back option would be provided to avoid high call charges for residents on a low income and if data could be provided on the number of repeat calls made on a specific matter. The Chief Officer confirmed that there was no intention to remove the telephone service and explained that the aim of the Strategy was to improve the number of services and range of functionality over the web to provide greater access to services for residents at a time and location that was convenient to them. He continued that staff in the Contact Centre would engage with customers and support them to self-serve through information, advice and guidance. The Chief Officer said there would also be wide spread promotion of the facilities available to residents on the Council's website to reduce the volume of calls made.

In response to a comment from Councillor David Wisinger, the Chief Officer explained that calls would be routed to the most appropriate service and expertise support would be available to address more complex enquiries and assist elderly or vulnerable people. He also explained that the number of calls per day were recorded which included the number of calls abandoned.

Councillor Patrick Heesom expressed concerns that some residents living in deprived areas may not have access to web based services at home or the IT skills or financial means to afford transport to contact centres out of their community. He emphasised the need for face to face conversation and said remote contact by telephone or on-line services was not suitable or user friendly in disadvantaged communities. He asked that consideration be given to increasing the number of Connect Centres specifically in deprived areas. The Chief Officer responded to the comments and reiterated that the Digital Strategy would enhance the existing services provided to residents and increase access to services beyond normal office hours at a time and location that was convenient to the individual. He explained that the Authority had 5 Connect Centres throughout the County and staff at the Centres would be able to provide personal assistance to residents and work in conjunction with the Contact Centre to resolve enquiries and support people to self-serve.

Councillor Janet Axworthy expressed her appreciation to Chief Officers and their teams for the hard work and planning which had been undertaken to combine the Streetscene and Housing teams into a single combined team and relocating to Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe.

Councillor Tudor Jones commented on the need to promote the Digital Strategy to inform the general public of the services available on the Council's website and how they could access them, citing information in public community centres and libraries as an example. The Chief Officer commented that the use of digital services would assist people with physical disabilities by increasing

accessibility. He acknowledged the points made by Councillor Jones and said there was also a need to promote awareness with other local authorities, citing Denbighshire and Wrexham as examples, of the digital services available in Flintshire for residents who lived close to Flintshire's borders.

Councillor Patrick Heesom commented that the system should be based around the needs of people first and foremost not service based and said provision should be made for residents to have direct contact in their local area. In response to the concerns raised by Councillor Heesom the Chief Officer explained that there was no additional funding available to increase the number of Connect Centres. He reiterated that a telephone service would continue to be provided with the additional facility for people to self-serve via the Council's web service. Appointments could be made to visit Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe, and people were also able to receive personal support at a Connect Centre.

Councillor David Wisinger asked what backup services were available for ICT systems at Ty Dewi Sant. The Chief Officer explained that contingency support was provided by Information and Business Services at County Hall, which was the same as the support provided to the Authority's sites in other areas.

Councillor Tudor Jones asked if measures were in place to address abusive calls or face to face enquiries.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the design principles underpinning the creation of a single Contact Centre and endorses the progress made towards delivering the Digital Customer theme of the Digital Strategy.

31. COUNCIL PLAN 2018/19 MID-YEAR MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced the report to present the monitoring of progress at the mid-year point of 2018/19 for the Council Plan priority 'Connected Council' relevant to the Committee. He advised that the mid-year report showed that 88% of activities were making good progress with 81% likely to achieve their planned outcomes. 79% of performance indicators had met or exceeded their targets. Risks were being managed with a minority of 18% being assessed as major.

Councillor Patrick Heesom queried the performance indicator concerning limitations on public funding to subsidise alternative models (ADMs). The Chief Officer (Social Services) referred to the positive feedback from review meetings on the first year trading figures for ADMs, however, he said the challenges to public funding remained and this was the reason for the current risk rating. The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) advised that the business plans for ADMs were reviewed regularly.

Councillor Patrick Heesom asked that a meeting be arranged to discuss the funding available for the transfer of assets within the Growth Bid.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered the mid-year Council Plan 2018/19 Monitoring Report to monitor under performance and raised a number of issues with Officers.

32. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. She drew attention to the items scheduled for the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 28 January 2019, and referred to the item on Connah's Quay Swimming Pool – Cambrian Aquatics Mid-Year Progress Report 2018/19. The Facilitator explained that the Board members of Cambrian Aquatics had difficulty attending the meeting of the Committee at County Hall, Mold, on 28 January, and it was suggested that the time and the venue of the meeting be reconsidered to enable them to attend. The Chair proposed that Members considered holding a meeting in the evening at Cambrian Aquatics, Connah's Quay, to facilitate the attendance of the Board members. When put to the vote this was not carried. It was agreed that the Chief Officer would report back to Cambrian Aquatics on the matter of attendance at the meeting scheduled for 28 January.

Members were advised that a further item to provide an update on the Digital Strategy would be included on the Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme as submitted be approved; and
- (b) That the Facilitator in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings should this be necessary.

33. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.35 pm)

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Chairman