

MEETING OF THE ENGAGEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 26 JULY 2012 2.30 PM



GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Bob Adams (Chairman)
Councillor Ray Auger
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Ibis Channell

Councillor Jock Kerr
Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor Rosemary H Woolley (Vice-Chairman)

OFFICERS

Head of People, Projects and Performance (Sue Griffiths)
Head of Finance (Richard Wyles)
Community Engagement and Policy Development Officer (Carol Drury)
Democratic Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

68. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None disclosed.

69. ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH MAY 2012

The notes taken on 24th May 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

70. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman referred to the Members Code of Conduct which had been discussed at the last meeting and the recommendation made from the Group to include a paragraph on Respect within the code, however, at the Council meeting this had not been included in the Code that was adopted. He said that this would be taken up with the Monitoring Officer once she was back at work.

At the last meeting an update on Broadband had been requested. This topic had been discussed at the recent Communities PDG on Thursday 19th July and the Chairman advised those Members who were interested in the topic to read the minutes from the meeting.

71. HATE CRIME - PRESENTATION

Recommendation

That Jane Crane attends Council in September to give her presentation on Hate Crime.

The Chairman informed the Group that Jane Crane had sent her apologies. He had already seen the presentation at a recent Community Focus Forum meeting and he felt that if the Group were agreeable that Jane be asked to give her presentation to the Council in September before a wider audience.

Members agreed and it was recommended that Jane Crane be asked to give her presentation to Council in September.

72. QUESTION WITHOUT DISCUSSION REFERRED FROM COUNCIL 12TH JULY 2012

The Group had nothing to add to the previous letter that had been circulated to Councillor Shorrocks. It was agreed that a letter be sent referring Councillor Shorrocks to the previous letter circulated.

➤ **Action Note**

Councillor Shorrocks be referred to the previous letter sent by the Group

73. CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY - UPDATE

The Head of People, Projects and Performance, Sue Griffiths updated the PDG following the last meeting of the Group. She referred to good customer service and what this meant to people. Managers within the authority had been asked what they saw as good customer service in their everyday lives. Responses included having a "relationship" with the organisations, being listened to by someone who seemed to care, promises being kept, a choice of methods either phone or online query. Research into the quality of current customer service was undertaken which included mystery shopping and online transactions. A customer access strategy would be created in line with the findings, best practice and these would be linked with South Kesteven's other initiatives.

The Head of People, Projects and Performance then highlighted the current contact through Customer Services which was as follows:

- Telephone calls to CSC = 47894 (2011/12)
- Emails handled by CSC = 4620 (2011/12)
- Face to face customers = 26357 (2011/12)
 - Grantham 54% (14235)
 - Bourne 24% (6427)

- Deeping 9% (2348)
- Stamford 13% (3347)

The face to face information reflects most contacts made in this way with the council. However customers phoning or emailing directly to services are not routinely counted by all services.

Members felt that voice mail should be used to the absolute minimum and that phones should not be left ringing. The Head of People, Projects and Performance said that the use of “Hunt Groups” should be more widely used to enable a ringing telephone to be picked up by someone, even if they were not in that section so that a message could be taken.

The mystery shopping findings were helpful as they identified what worked well and what didn't work so well. Following this some quick wins were put in place to help give a better service to our customers and these included a reduced number of published telephone numbers, more resources being put in to web chat and commissioning customer focus training together with customer standards behaviours “putting ourselves in a customer's shoes” All this information was also being used to help develop the Bourne Community Access Point.

She then spoke about the direction of travel from the current position to what the customer access aspired to. The proposed approach to reach this had the following key points:

- Virtual customer service “centre” to help customers gain a resolution first time
- Ability to see customer as a whole rather than by service
- Capable customers/easy queries –electronic
- Vulnerable customers/complex queries – phone or face to face
- Seamless service for customers even on the most complex queries
- Support improved approach with good quality training
- Head of People, Performance and Projects to be the overall customer champion
- Customer Service Manager will manage the customer standards element
- Heads of Service will manage the technical/professional element

This approach would need to be done in deployment phases the first phase being to establish standards and consistency within the Council which could take between six to nine months. The next phase was to consolidate and improve and could take about 18months to embed within the Council. The third phase was to lead and excel and offer services on behalf of other partners such as universal credit work. An opportunity to do this was offered with the library service in the Bourne CAP project.

She then gave examples of customer journeys from those that can be done

directly on line and therefore have no impact of customer services advisors to those that require someone to listen and care about what the customer is saying and have a direct impact on the customer services advisor.

The next steps were to use the strategy as a management tool and an improvement plan was being adopted. She then referred to work that was being done in exploring the use of a citizen's panel to help with consultation and projects where customer insight was needed. This panel would be made up of people who were more informed about how the council worked and therefore could provide information on how to make changes to improve services.

Various comments were then made about issues that Members had encountered to which the Head of People, Projects and Performance replied.

The Chairman thanked the Head of People, Projects and Performance for attending the meeting.

74. BOURNE COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT - UPDATE

The Head of Finance, Richard Wyles updated Members on the current position with the Bourne Community Access Point (Bourne CAP). He briefly referred to the background and purpose behind the Access Point. The Community Access Point had been spoken about for a number of years but due to the cut in grants it had become more urgent for the Lincolnshire County Council due to the threat to the services such as the library. The Access Point would incorporate the three tiers of local government as well as other partners who have expressed an interest in having a presence in the town such as the CAB and the police. The Registrar will also have a presence thanks to the CAP project.

Work on the Bourne Corn Exchange began in April 2012 and it was expected to be complete in February 2013. The ground floor would be changed into a community hub incorporating district and library services. An improved customer experience would be in place which included self-service, dedicated officer support and specialist advice to improve the offer for customers in the south of the district. There would be a culture shift with officers being based at Bourne rather than Grantham. Key benefits included giving customers the ability to access a wide range of council services from a single point of access. The building and resources would have the best use made of them without compromising service quality and a central location would be created in the heart of the town. The Head of Finance then explained the proposed layout to Members although the space would be flexible with the ground floor having the library and customer access points and the first floor being used by District and Town Council employees.

He went on further to speak about how the areas would be used and the booking system that would be in place. The Function Room was being kept

open whilst the works were being carried out and disruption was being kept to a minimum. The Bourne Community were in the main supportive of the change with organisations that had previously used the first floor being accommodated elsewhere in the town.

There would be staffing implications as the library staff were being commission under a TUPE proposal and some staff would be based at Bourne rather than Grantham. The opening hours would also be extended with the CAP being opened Monday to Friday between 9am – 5pm and between 10am and 1pm on Saturdays.

Members asked various questions about the costs of the project, leases to Bourne Town Hall and the funding to which Mr Wyles replied.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wyles for his presentation and the Group awaited the next chapter.

75. COMMUNITY FOCUS FORUM - UPDATE

The Community Engagement and Policy Development Officer gave a presentation to Members on the Community Focus Forum. She apologised for not circulating the presentation but it had been put together in the short time before the meeting, following Jane Crane sending her apologies.

The Community Focus Forum had been established in 2010 as a critical friend and was used as a consultation body in terms of equality analysis it met once a month. It covered a cross section of the community and helped assist the Council in fulfilling and monitoring its statutory requirements with regard to its Equality Duty. The three aims were:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The people who attended covered a diverse range of minority groups including people with disabilities, mental health, black and minority ethnic groups, the transgender community, people from the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual communities, faith groups and carers. The protected characteristics covered were:

- Age
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Disability

- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

Originally there were only six strands of protected characteristics some of which only covered people in terms of employment law but more were added with the introduction of the Equality Act 2010. The CFF were always looking for further members with adverts being placed in SKYLINE and SK Today. Members of the CFF brought a wealth of insight into the group. Officers who attended the meetings included the Chairman of the Engagement PDG and the Portfolio Holder for Grow the Economy and Economic Development. Carol chaired the meetings and Elaine Claridge, Research and information Officer Housing Solutions who had instigated the Group also attended.

The CFF had helped in the development and implementation of Service Area Impact Assessments, consultations, insights into issues and experiences, information sharing and developing links into “hard to reach” communities. The meetings were informal but dealt with formal issues. Moving Forward the CFF would be assisting with the delivery of our Corporate Equality Scheme, further consultation, improving links and scrutiny.

Questions were asked about policies they had helped with to which Carol replied. Two Members from the PDG were keen to become Members of the Forum, Councillor Bisnauthsing and Councillor Robins and Carol said they would be welcome to attend the meetings.

76. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

Members were circulated with a draft work programme which listed issues for consideration by the Group. The dates shown on the programme were not set in stone but a guide of when decisions would be made after speaking to Head of Service and the Forward Plan. Issues would be added and “greyed” out as and when the Group discussed the issue or decision had been made. Each item was briefly discussed and the Chairman asked if Members of the Group could be circulated with a current copy of the Complaints Procedure and the Consultation Strategy.

>Action Note

E-mail Group Members a copy of the current Complaints Procedure and the Consultation Strategy.

The Community Engagement and policy Development Officer said that meetings between the Cabinet, the PDG Chairman and Vice Chairman would be reinstated shortly.

The work programme would be a standing item on the agenda.

The meeting closed at 4.25pm.