
Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Tuesday, 12 September 2017

Present:

Cllr M Mackrory (Chairman)	Cllr D Louis
Cllr J Beavis	Cllr V Metcalfe
Cllr M Buckley	Cllr R Pratt
Cllr S Canning	Cllr C Sargeant
Cllr M Hardware	Cllr W Schmitt
Cllr I Henderson	

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from: Cllr A Sheldon (substituted by Cllr S Canning), Cllr M Steptoe and Cllr C Weston.

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Canning declared a personal interest in agenda item 5, concerning the Members' Enquiries Task & Finish Group, as he had been the Cabinet Member responding to the recommendations. He would leave the meeting for the discussion of this item. (Item 5 refers.)

Cllr Pratt declared that he was chairman of South Essex Parking Partnership. (Item 5 refers.)

3 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

Cllr Canning left the meeting at this point.

5 Members' Enquiries Task & Finish Group

Members received report CSC/15/17, which provided an update on the consideration and implementation of recommendations on the Member Enquiries Service made by the Committee in January 2017. The Chairman welcomed Cllr S Barker, Cabinet Member for Culture, Communities & Customer, Robbie Watson-Levey, Customer and Member Enquiries Manager, and Richard Buttress, Senior Customer Services Officer.

Cllr Barker introduced the item by making several points:

- the responses to the recommendations were the result of meetings between officers, Cllr Robert Mitchell, as Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, and herself
- there was a tendency toward Highways matters
- she would like the first recommendation to be strengthened in time, once the Report-It tool was sufficiently robust; so that all first time reports relating to Highways incidents should be made using the Report-It tool (with enquiries only being made to Members Enquiries after a two-week interval if still unresolved)
- she would also like to see every enquiry receive an email response, with a reference number, so that members can trace them more easily.

Cllr Buckley, as chairman of the Task & Finish Group, added that not only a bounceback email was needed but something to alert members when something has happened. He acknowledged that some progress had already made, although a good deal remained to do. In response to this particular point, it was noted that Cllr Mitchell was looking at improving the Report-It tool and exploring ways of introducing such features.

Members made various contributions and received a variety of responses:

- members of the public needed to be given a timeframe for action and an explanation if this was not met. They also needed to be given appropriate, comprehensible information, rather than being forced to find their own way through a field of largely irrelevant material
- other teams would benefit from spending time working with Members' Enquiries - such an exercise had just been arranged with officers from Highways
- all cases were managed, so that they were not held up by staff going on holiday or being unavailable through sickness, etc
- the overall average respond time had improved from 9.4 days in 2016/17 to 8 days in 2017/18 to date; but there remained a significant delay in Cabinet Office sign-off: the overall average time would be 5.6 days without Cabinet sign-off
- there were no service level agreements for providing customer data in place with Ringway Jacobs; this might be a good time to consider introducing them
- incompatibility of IT systems did not help matters
- a Member survey was under preparation
- it was not always clear to Members when they should escalate an enquiry; when the Report-It tool works properly, there should be no need for a Member to get involved in this way.

In the wake of the discussions, the following further recommendations were **agreed**:

1. To diarise a further member training session on Report-It tool and highways matters.
2. To acknowledge the Cabinet Member's commitment to further review the Report-It tool and the production of more timely and regular responses and updates and indicative timescales for action.
3. Heartened by first indication of joint training with Highways, Members strongly encourage that further regular such initiatives are pursued with all service areas.
4. Further clarification to be provided on ECC relationship with parking partnerships in relation to accountability and responsibility and reporting of incidents
5. Cllr Mitchell to factor in a method to advise members if projects are delayed.
6. To encourage further differentiation between the management and response to non complex and complex issues.
7. That the Ringway Jacobs service level agreement be amended to include customer information timescales and quality of response as part of 5+5 contract re-negotiations.
8. Further integration of Highways and Members' Enquiries IT systems be investigated.
9. To welcome the commitment that there will be a further member survey and that it needs to be designed so that it is comparable to the previous survey.

It was agreed that the committee should receive, in good time ahead of its next scheduled meeting on 24th October, indicative timings for the implementation of recommendations and the timeline for the review being conducted by Cllr Mitchell.

The chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their submission to the committee.

Cllr Canning returned to the meeting at this point.

6

Work Programme

Members received report CSC/16/17, which provided the current position as regards work planning and programming. The Chairman reminded Members that he and the vice chairmen had met with Nicole Wood, Director for Financial Services, prior to the meeting, to prioritise the work programme in line with established criteria.

It was noted that the intention was to give value for money to residents,

with issues that would produce the greatest impact on them. It was also noted that the programme was a working document, to be amended as required.

Members approved the programme.

7

Date of Next Activity Day

Tuesday 24 October was noted as the next activity day.

Chairman