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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CORPORATE SCRUTINY PANEL

Friday 12th January 2018

Present: Councillor Gulfam Asif (Chair)
Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Hilary Richards
Councillor John Taylor
Councillor Carole Pattison

Co-optees Philip Chaloner
Linda Summers

In attendance: Carol Stump, Chief Librarian
Dave Thompson, Head of Access Strategy & Delivery
Councillor Graham Turner
Councillor Musarrat Khan

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

2 Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Admission of the Public

Agreed all agenda items to be considered in the public session.

4 Financial Monitoring

RESOLVED - That the Q2 Financial monitoring report be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

5 Access To Services

Members of the Panel received a report which outlined the Council's strategy for residents and communities to be able to readily access information, signposting and services in order to improve the customer experience and journey, first time, more of the time. The report explained that to deliver the outcome, the principles underpinning the service proposition were:

- **Digital by Design** in an inclusive way that recognised that not all sections of the population would be digitally literate or have access to technology.
- **Telephone and Face to Face** access where appropriate.
- **Community Hubs** where appropriate that co-locate a number of services – these could include adult and children's social care and communities teams.

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- **Local Access Points** which have due regard to the wider assets within neighbourhoods, wards and communities which are well networked and supported a high quality back office.

Carol Stump, Chief Librarian and Dave Thompson, Head of Access Strategy and Delivery attended for the item. Ms Stump explained that it was important that customers experienced the same whichever centre they attended. The Panel was informed that it was important to consider building rationalisation and colocation. All the principles were underpinned by a mobile and agile workforce, which would include being able to 'touch down' at hubs, or being able to go into people's homes to assist them with accessing services.

Mr Thompson explained that the report before the Panel was about bringing together the learning from the projects that had been completed over the last couple of years.

The Panel raised a number of concerns about the current access to services questions that the public were asked, as they were not give the option to say that they would prefer services to be local to them. The Panel also expressed concern about the transport links between rural areas to their specified community hub, making travel extremely difficult. Ms Stump replied that they must take account of vulnerable people within the community, and that they were working with communities around local access points. It is understood that there would still be times when officers would need to go into people's homes to assist the more vulnerable members of the community. Ms Stump explained that there were mapping exercises ongoing which would map out what services were available and where, to ensure that customers were able to access the council if they were not able to do this digitally. However, Ms Stump informed the Panel that the majority of people wanted the council to go down the digital route.

In relation to the options given as part of the consultation, the Panel asked why open questions were not used to ask the public what they would prefer. The Panel also questioned the officers who wrote the questions that were put to the public as part of the consultation. The Panel heard that depending on which service was being consulted upon, depended on which team, along with the communications team, wrote the questions. Ms Stump explained that the council also worked with a research company who had been part of many consultations who guided and advised the service on putting together the consultation report. The Panel also noted that there was no merit in asking the public questions around services that the council could no longer provide, and would not be viable.

Mr Thompson informed the Panel that prior to 2012 when the two customer service centres were created in Huddersfield and Dewsbury, the customer experience was not a good one, given that they would need to travel to a number of different locations to access the services they needed. The feedback being received in the two contact centres is that customers valued the centralised locations, they were no longer in queues and only needed to attend one site to deal with the vast majority of services.

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Mr Thompson explained that the customer service centre takes 1.5 million phone calls per year, and it was understood that a lot of people still used that route, including vulnerable people and their support workers. Mr Thompson informed the Panel that there was some work being done around the number of vulnerable people that attended with their support worker directly to the customer service centre. This would ensure that any decision made would continue to support vulnerable people within the community.

The Panel asked how the local access points would work in practice and how they would link into other services and areas of the council, for example KNH. Ms Stump explained that in those instances there were trained staff and volunteers who would know how to signpost people as a form of 'triage'. A good example Ms Stump explained, was Paddock Village Hall who the council worked closely with, and they worked with other services in the area. They would know how to contact relevant services, but also under a mobile and agile workforce, officers could touch-down in some of the spaces, with customers being able to make appointments in these spaces, perhaps it could be a doctor's surgery, where information could be given when needed. There would be a mapping process done around where people can access services in each area.

The Panel recognised that over the years, the public had become acquainted with different digital approaches within the private sector. However, the Panel noted that local government had suffered over the years from criticism that it had not kept up with the pace of change in the digital world and not being as efficient as it could be. The Panel welcomed the Access to Strategy approach, recognising that in some ways the local authority was catching up with other sectors. However, there was a danger that some members of the community could be left behind, particularly in rural districts where communications were not as good as in other areas.

The Panel felt that the Council should be making more use of Skype with members of the public being able to contact officers from their homes. Ms Stump advised the Panel that this was something that was being considered as the technology progressed. Mr Thompson explained that the aim was for the customers query to be dealt with at the first point of contact. However, he informed the Panel that the vast majority of people who went into the customer service centre were people who did not have access at home. The Panel raised questions around whether other services were online so that any customer skyping would also have the opportunity to complete forms electronically. Mr Thompson explained that his service was process mapping every face to face interaction so that any support that was needed could be identified before skype interviewing would be implemented.

The Panel questioned how many disabled parking spaces were outside the customer services centres in Dewsbury and Huddersfield, and how many bus stops were in the area for the public to use. Mr Thompson explained that there were 10 parking spaces in Huddersfield, with other spaces available underneath Civic Centre 1. Dewsbury had disabled spaces available at the side of the Town Hall and in other car parks around the area. Mr Thompson informed the Panel that the travel links around Huddersfield and Dewsbury Centres were good, but understood the concerns about customers travelling to the customer service centres from rural areas.

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The Panel expressed a need for officers working in the community hubs who knew and understood the local area, particularly in rural parts where what appeared to be a short journey, could in fact prove difficult to navigate by public transport. Ms Stump informed the Panel that this as an area that would be looked at both for the library consultation and the access to services strategy, and which was why local access points were being set up.

Mr Thompson informed the Panel that the document scanners that were at the customer service centres had ground breaking technology, developed by staff within the council working alongside a partner.

The Panel were advised that mystery shopping was an integral part of the service delivery and officers agreed to share the outcomes with members of the Panel.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That Carol Stump and Dave Thompson be thanked for their report and attending the meeting.
- (b) That information relating to 'mystery shopping' of customer service centres be sent to members of the Panel.

6 Forward Agenda Plan / Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel will be held on 9 February 2018 at 9.00am.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the Agenda Plan be noted.
- (b) That the next meeting of the Scrutiny panel will be held on 9 February 2018.