

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Mandy Brar, Wisdom Da Costa, Phil Haseler (Vice-Chairman), Ross McWilliams (Chairman) and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillor Andrew Johnson

Officers: Nikki Craig, Jenifer Jackson, Chris Joyce, Duncan Sharkey and Ben Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No Apologies for Absence were received.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED Unanimously: The minutes of the meeting on 29 July 2019 were a true and accurate record and be approved.

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2018-19

Nikki Craig, Head of HR and Corporate Projects, updated the Panel on the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report.

Nikki Craig reported that the annual report covered the period April 2018 to March 2019.

Councils were required under statute to produce a report for adults and children's complaints, but not on complaints relating to corporative activities; however the Royal Borough's annual report covers all services.

The council's complaints process was made up of various stages depending on the type of complaint. A complainant was able to refer their case to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman at any time, for them to consider their complaint, however the LGSCO would not normally review a complaint if it had not exhausted the council's complaints process.

In 2018/19, overall out of over 1600 contacts made to the council's compliments and complaints team, 437 were progressed as complaints. Of these 255 were for services covered by this O&S with 161 for commissioning – communities broken down in **Table 2 on P12** of your packs. Fifty three of these were for housing services, 39 were for planning and 2 were for property services. These combined made up 58% of the total complaints progressed.

Themes of complaints were self-selecting by the complainant with the main reasons for all complaints received in 2018/19 being 'lack of action' (we did not do what we said we would do) and 'requiring help, intervention or guidance'. These scored similarly to 'attitude or behaviour of staff' and 'failed to follow timescales'.

Timeliness in responding to complaints had improved for the council from 51% in 2017/18 to 64% in 2018/19.

In relation to the outcomes, the council upheld or partially upheld 67% of all complaints; teams in commissioning-communities upheld similar to the council average at 66%, housing upheld 70%, planning upheld less at 36% and property services upheld none. 0%. Learnings were taken from complaints upheld and partially upheld with some examples detailed in the annual report (p35) Table 15.

As stated previously, if a complainant remained dissatisfied, they could complain to the LGSCO. Of the 46 decisions made by the LGSCO in 2018/19, 1 was for services within commissioning-communities teams, which was upheld; 3 were for housing, all of which were premature and the complainant referred back to the local authority; 8 were for planning with 1 being premature, 2 being closed after initial enquiries, 3 not upheld and 2 upheld. There were none that related to property services.

Finally, the council had seen an increase in compliments from 456 in 2017/18 to 555 in 2018/19. Of the 555, 105 were received by teams in Commissioning-Communities (**Break down in Table 16 P36 of your packs**), 10 were received by housing, 19 were received by planning and 1 was received by property services.

Councillor Da Costa asked the Officer what constituted a complaint and were operators trained to be all interpreting a complaint. Nikki Craig informed the Panel that if a complaint was of a service issue and it was a one off, it would be sent to the service to resolve. However, if it was an issue that had been repeatedly reported, it was treated as a complaint. The decision was made by one of the three team members. All team members had been trained to the same level and logged all complaints on to a system so that the history was recorded. The system was audited regularly.

The Panel discussed the following points;

- The number of complaints were reducing but the severity could have been more serious.
- Some of the complaints related to children's services were very complex. This was because they were multifaceted and complicated to deal with.
- Complaints related to highways showed a performance issue. The learning points were shared and learnt from. The annual report was sent to Heads of Service to monitor.
- The lead members received detailed reports and all KPIs were online to monitor.

Highways complaints were discussed in great detail. They were decreasing. The time to respond back to the residents was decreasing but this was taking time. Some complaints were very complicated. The main area of focus for highways was the speed of response and keeping the customer informed of progress. A timely response was more important than a detailed report. The team needed to respond faster to the resident. Since this had been flagged up, different practices had been put into place. A weekly report was produced flagging up nearing deadlines and passed deadlines. These were all followed up with the service or partner. The process was being improved. The Chairman asked why Highways had so many complaints. Ben Smith informed the Panel that the team were now trying to be more customer focussed and working better to keep the customer updated.

RESOLVED Unanimously: that the Panel noted the report and agreed that the report was published on the Council's website and that the annual report continued to be produced and presented at Overview and Scrutiny panels.

Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Ben Smith, Head of Commissioning – Communities, introduced the Q1 Performance Report.

The Panel felt that the report was difficult to read and understand. The graphs were more useful but lacking commentary.

ACTION: Feedback to Strategy Team – to include list of action points to improve the target.

The Chairman asked the Lead Member of Infrastructure how he felt the Homelessness Strategy had been implemented so far. Councillor Andrew Johnson informed the Panel that the new Head of Housing was due to start employment shortly. The progress was going well but could be better. The Borough needed to shift away from operation and move more towards a cohesive strategy. Further work was required with other services and third party providers to provide outstanding services. The Lead Member highlighted that it was the time of the year where services would be required more. The Panel would be scrutinising this further. The Lead Member commented that the borough were working with third party providers, who provided an excellent service.

The Lead Member informed the Panel that some progress had been made with the hostel service but still further work needed to be done in this area. All links needed to be looked at such as social housing and apprenticeships.

ACTION: Provide presentation at next Panel of way forward by Head of Housing.

The Chairman asked if there was any progress on contactless giving. The Lead Member reported that there was some potential, this was an innovative, creative and successful means of giving and all these options would be considered.

ACTION: Inform Panel of how many homeless people had been physically housed by RBWM.

The Lead Member highlighted that the voluntary sector played a vital role in assisting the Borough to reduce/stop homelessness and rough sleeping. They supported the Council to provide an extra level of intervention. It was a key priority to rebuild relationships.

The Panel asked about the consultation on PSPS and the extension of this. This includes the powers for Community wardens to issue fines to people that had characteristics of rough sleepers. The Lead Member felt this was better directed to the Head of Homelessness.

ACTION: Councillor Da Costa to directly contact the Head of Homelessness.

RESOLVED Unanimously: That the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel notes the report and notes the 2019/20 Strategic Performance Framework in Appendix A, notes the 2019/20 Q1 Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Report in Appendix B and requests relevant Lead Members, Directors and Heads of Service to maintain focus on improving performance.

CIL REVIEW

Chris Joyce, Infrastructure and CIL Manager, gave a presentation on CIL (Attached).

The points discussed included:

- S106 had not been totally phased out.
- There are three zones set out in the CIL charging schedule, which includes a zero rate in Maidenhead Town Centre.
- There are still opportunities to collect contributions from developers in Maidenhead Town Centre through S106 agreements.
- Regulation 123 had been removed which has given the council greater flexibility to do this.
- The infrastructure development plan is based on the development proposed in the Borough Local Plan and there is greater confidence in what is coming forward in the next five years as the council has to set out a clear five year supply of housing land.

- Consultations were taking place with Parishes, communities, town forums and neighbourhood plan groups.

ACTION: Chris Joyce to report back to the Panel after six months.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel reviewed the work programme.

The Chairman informed the Panel that two task and finish groups had been arranged on 3 October and 3 December.

ACTION: Clerk to send invite to Panel members for the task and finish groups.

ACTION: Bring back recommendations to 3 February meeting.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....