

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 12 September 2023

Present: Mike Wilcox (Chair)

| Attendance | |
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| Mike Davies | Bob Spencer |
| John Francis | Samantha Thompson (Vice-Chair (Overview)) |
| Kath Perry, MBE | Mike Worthington |
| Jeremy Pert | Nigel Yates |

Also in attendance: Alan White

Apologies: Tina Clements and Bernard Peters

Part One

13. Declarations of Interest

None declared at the meeting.

14. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2023

Resolved: – That, the minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Corporate Services, Annual Report 2022/23

The Leader introduced the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Corporate Services Annual Report for 2022-23 and reminded members that the complaints system was an important part of the councils learning and development.

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Manager briefly explained the Corporate Complaints procedure and the stages involved. Members were reminded that safeguarding complaints had been considered by the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee.

It was explained that there was still a direct phone line to the complaints team for those people who preferred this to the on-line form or email.

A total of 1216 complaints and feedback had been received during 2022/23. MP enquiries remained the largest number of contacts.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- Complaints regarding Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were considered by the Safeguarding O&S Committee. The Leader explained the recent changes in Children and Family service which it was hoped would improve delays in EHCP processing.
- Lessons were learnt from each complaint and processes reviewed where necessary. Recent changes in CQC legislation ensured that lessons resulting from adult social care complaints were dealt with by a performance group which ensured improvements were disseminated to appropriate teams.
- It was acknowledged that publishing increased investment, led to an increase in complaints. An example was given of highway investment.
- A question on the availability of the online app for android phones was asked. Information was not available at the meeting but would be provided to committee members.
- There had been an increase in the use of the online form but email remained the most popular form of contact.
- Front line contact, for example through Councillors, was seen as an important mechanism of highlighting concerns and rectifying issues before they became complaints. It was noted that complaint numbers were very low but elected members dealt with a number of issues which prevented complaints being raised. Refresh training on the complaints process had been provided for members recently. It was suggested that this be an annual training event.
- The customer survey and other service surveys which were carried out periodically also helped to highlight areas which needed to be reviewed.
- There had been a backlog in dealing with insurance claims for highway damage due to potholes. This was dealt with by the councils insurance company.
- The number of complaints which had been signposted to other local authorities had increased. It was explained that the Staffordshire leaders board were considering a 'single front door' approach for residents. Lichfield were to pilot the approach and the results would be reported back to the board.
- Compliments were received but collection of the information was reliant on the departments letting the team know.

Members expressed their thanks to the Complaints team for their care and support provided to customers when they raised issues against departments.

Resolved:

- a) The Complaints team be thanked for their support and work undertaken over the past 12 months.
- b) the Complaints process training be included in the annual Members

Training Programme.

- c) Information on the online app working for android phones be reported to members after the meeting.

16. Electoral Review of Staffordshire County Council - Draft Recommendations

The Leader introduced the report and briefly outlined the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) proposals:

- LGBCE have agreed to 62 Councillors (as current)
- Agreed to the proposal to have 1 elected member per division
- Reduction of 1 member in Tamworth
- Increase of 1 member in East Staffordshire
- Major boundary changes to Stafford
- Moderate tweaks to Cannock
- Minor tweaks to East Staffs, Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands
- No tweaks to Lichfield, South Staffordshire and Tamworth

The Head of Member and Democratic Services gave a short presentation outlining the review process and consultation timetable. The LGBCE proposals would be considered at Council on the 12 October 2023 and a formal council response would feed into the LGBCE consultation, which ends on 16 October 2023.

During the discussion, members asked questions and were provided with the following information:

- All County Councillors had been provided with the proposals.
- Some members, whilst acknowledging that it was difficult to get a perfect solution, felt that there was an imbalance in some wards.
- Members were encouraged to make individual representations to the Commission, particularly if they had an alternative proposal.
- Knowledge and experience were often lost when boundaries were changed.
- The location of community facilities were not taken into account.
- The impact on rural divisions and not losing individual identity was particularly challenging.

Resolved:

- a) The progress on the County's Electoral Review was noted and the officers were thanked for their work during the review.
- b) That the comments from the Committee as listed above be referred to Cabinet as part of the consultation.

17. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes - Update

The Chairman introduced the report and reminded the Committee that as part of its role as overarching O&S committee, they had responsibility for

developing and agreeing the combined work programme for the Council's O&S function.

Appendix 1 of the report outlined the O&S planned items for all four committees for quarter two. Appendix 2 listed the actions and outcomes of recommendations made from May 2023. It was noted that this was a developing piece of work and monitoring of recommendations would continue to be reviewed.

Resolved: The work programmes for the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees were agreed.

18. Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme. It was noted that the business from the 24 October meeting had been moved to the 6 November 2023 meeting.

Resolved: That the work programme be approved.

Chair