

Agenda Item 3

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

20 FEBRUARY 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.25 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Hamish Badenoch, Mary Curtin, John Dehaney, Brenda Fraser, Abigail Jones, Sally Kenny, Oonagh Moulton and David Williams

Co-opted Member Helen Forbes

ALSO PRESENT: Sean Cunniffe (Head of Customer Contact), Sophie Ellis (Assistant Director of Business Improvement) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Peter McCabe (substituted by Councillor Mary Curtin), Councillor Dennis Pearce (substituted by Councillor John Dehaney), Councillor Mike Brunt and co-opted member Colin Powell.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2018 (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2018 (Agenda Item 4)

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

5 SHARED AND OUTSOURCED SERVICES TASK GROUP - CABINET ACTION PLAN UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Sophie Ellis, Assistant Director of Business Improvement, gave apologies for absence from the Chief Executive who had asked her to deputise for him. He had asked her to relay to the Commission that he had been reminded by recent media reports that any service delivery model can result in difficulties and it is therefore important to ensure that the best approach is rigorously assessed on a case by case basis, which is the intention of the action plan set out in the report.

Members expressed disappointment in the response to recommendation 5. The recommendation was for service managers to have a mandatory appraisal objective to familiarise themselves with best practice elsewhere. The response in the action plan was to address this through learning and development rather than as an appraisal objective. Sophie Ellis said that CMT felt that training and development is

the best way to improve managers' skillsets, which was what the Commission were keen to ensure. She added that there was no reluctance for service managers to look at best practice elsewhere and that not including the objective should not be taken as a sign that it was something they were not held to account for since a lot of officers' work is not encapsulated in appraisal objectives, particularly if it is regarded as core work.

Sophie Ellis said that the current refresh of the TOMs will ensure that delivery models are reviewed and a review schedule will be set out in the TOM. Sign off is expected in July so that there the TOMS can be aligned to the Administration's priorities after the May elections.

Members also questioned adequacy of the response to recommendation 8 – the intention of the recommendation was to ensure that there would be a chance to scrutinise proposals for large or strategically important outsourced services at an early stage when there was still time to have some influence on its development. The action plan suggests that this is addressed through the Forward Plan, which Members believe is at too late a stage in the process. Sophie Ellis undertook to report the Commission's views back to CMT.

The Commission welcomed the draft toolkit and business case as set out in the appendices to the report. The Commission noted that interaction with pre-decision scrutiny had not been included and asked that this be explicitly addressed in the toolkit and business case paperwork.

6 CUSTOMER CONTACT PROGRAMME - UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Commission RESOLVED to take this as the last item on the agenda so that it could move into a closed session for discussion of commercially sensitive information.

Sophie Ellis, Assistant Director of Business Improvement, introduced the report and said that, although further progress had been made since she last attended the Commission, the programme had been frustrated by continuing delays in the delivery of functionality. Commercial negotiations with the supplier are continuing. The contract expires in May 2018 so officers are exploring the best option of ongoing support and hosting for the technology.

In response to questions about the initial timetable, planned completion date and whether much had been achieved, Sophie Ellis said that the initial planned completion date at contract award stage was April 2016 and the final date is not clear at present. In terms of progress made with moving customers towards online transactions, Sophie Ellis said that there were many services now provided online that had not been previously and that this was a significant step forward for the council.

Sophie Ellis said that the increased use of online services by the public had been achieved without publicity and that there had not been a reduction in the provision of telephone or face-to-face support for residents. In terms of equality of access and digital inclusion, Sophie Ellis said that the Council's strategy was for those channels to remain open and that the website would meet accessibility standards and be easy to use.

In response to a question about the level of savings that had been achieved as a result of the customer contact programme, Sophie Ellis undertook to provide details of this to members of the Commission. ACTION: Assistant Director of Business Improvement.

Members asked for some reassurance that various Apps for reporting streetscene issues could still be used – there had been reports from residents being unable to use these and, when used, not receiving a response from the council. Sophie Ellis said that the council's policy is definitely to allow these Apps to continue to be used and that following the previous update she had worked with colleagues to ensure this was the case and that there were no technical issues that prevented requests from being received. Sophie Ellis undertook to raise the issue with colleagues to ensure that service requests were being received and responded to. ACTION: Assistant Director of Business Improvement.

The Commission RESOLVED that the public be excluded from the meeting during further consideration of this item on the grounds that it is exempt from disclosure for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Open/public minute of exempt session

Sophie Ellis outlined the commercial discussions that were being undertaken with the supplier and provided further detail on this and on the options that were being considered for ongoing support and hosting for the technology. She also discussed some of the lessons learned with the Commission and said that there would be a thorough evaluation of this in due course.

In response to a request, Sophie Ellis undertook to provide members of the Commission with the total cost of the customer contact programme to date. ACTION: Assistant Director of Business Improvement

7 REGISTRATION SERVICES (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Customer Contact, Sean Cunniffe, introduced the report. He drew the Commissions attention to the positive feedback received from the General Register Office; proposals from the government to digitise services, which will lead to a fall in income; and the work undertaken and planned that will maximise income from the use of Morden Park House for ceremonial and other functions. He also outlined the arrangement whereby the cost of the Superintendent Registrar would be shared with Hackney Council.

In response to questions about the use of Morden Park House, Sean Cunniffe said that English Heritage would not permit permanent rigging for a marquee but that he had spoken to marquee companies and been assured that these could be erected on request for functions. Events must be small in scale and in keeping with the house. The courtyard is likely to be self-financing within two years. Charges are in line with those for council owned venues in other boroughs.

Sean Cunniffe provided additional information in response to questions about staffing:

- the registration service is a specialist area with a limited number of qualified personnel and so is difficult to recruit to.
- the resignation of the Superintendent Registrar had provided the opportunity to put a shared arrangement in place and ensures flexibility required during this period of service change as a result of the reduction of services by the Home Office.
- commercial opportunities would be pursued using the existing workforce with expertise brought in if necessary and where the cost of this would be less than the income generated.
- he talks to colleagues and external organisations to share learning on the management of events.

Sean Cunniffe undertook to provide information on current fees and charges.

ACTION: Head of Customer Contact

The Commission RESOLVED to thank Sean Cunniffe for his report, welcome the refurbishment of the courtyard at Morden Park House and request an update (including more data on cost) to be received in 12 months.

8 DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS FOR THE BOROUGH COMMANDER (Agenda Item 8)

Members agreed that, in addition to the usual crime data, they would agree the following questions to be sent to the Borough Commander so that he can answer them through a written statement or verbally at the Commission's meeting on 21 March:

- To confirm the start date for the new Borough Command Unit
- To confirm that Merton will continue to be policed at full strength with dedicated ward officers and PCSOs
- To confirm he is aware of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's aspiration to keep a police station in Merton – see discussion and submission to MOPAC (in minutes of meeting held on 20 September 2017)
- To provide information on the number of senior officers across the BCU and where they will be based.

- What can the police do to provide activities for young people to keep them from roaming the streets?
- What progress has been made to control street drinking and drinking in parks?

ACTION: Head of Democracy Services to send list of questions to the Borough Commander

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

The Commission resolved to AGREE the work programme.

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