

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 30th September 2014 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 8.30pm

Present: Councillors Stephen Cooksey (Chairman), Lucy Botting, Clare Curran, Paula Hancock, Raj Haque, Mary Huggins, Roger Hurst (substitute for David Draper), Howard Jones, Paul Potter and Peter Stanyard.

Also present: Councillors Bridget Lewis-Carr, Simon Ling, John Northcott, David Preedy and Chris Townsend

22. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th September were agreed as a correct record.

23. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lynne Brooks and David Draper.

24. Revised Website Update

The Committee received a presentation from the Customer Services and Communications Manager, Louise Bircher and ICT Manager, Bob Thomas, which provided Members with an overview of the Council's new website. During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- Statistical evidence indicated that the Council's website was being used by customers in increasing numbers, with over 36,000 visits in the past month in comparison with 31,000 in the same period last year.
- The Council last redesigned its website in 2009/2010. Since then there had been a number of technological developments such as the increasing prevalence of mobile phones and tablets to access the internet, which meant that the website needed to be enhanced if it was to meet the needs of the Council's customers.
- The redesign of the website was led by the Communications and ICT teams, with support from the Web Champions from across the Council Services. The objectives for the redesign of the website included the need for the site to be accessible through various media, to have a clear layout and simple navigation. The Communications team also challenged Council Services on their use of unnecessary information and also the need to print and sign forms.
- The current Council website was ranked 19th out of 429 government websites and had been consistently ranked within the top 25 government websites since 2011.
- It was confirmed that it was expected that work on the redesigned website would be completed within two weeks of the Committee meeting and that it would be confirmed to Members when the new website was 'live'.
- In response to a request to include the date of last update on each webpage, it was confirmed that this would be included on the new website.

It was questioned whether the new website would make use of cookies to retain customer information when e-forms were completed, so customers would not need to re-enter their data when making repeat requests for services. It was confirmed that the Council was not looking to store any information apart from fundamental details, as at the present time it was not clear how the use of cookies would be regulated by the European Union.

On the whole the Committee were encouraged by the work that had been undertaken by officers towards the redesign of the Council's website, particularly the emphasis on making the new website as straightforward and usable as possible for customers. It was also felt that the Council taking a proactive approach to redesigning the website, taking into account new technology, despite being

rated in the top 25 of Government websites by Site Morse over the past few years, reflected well on the Council.

25. Review of Complaints 2013-2014

The Committee received a report setting out details of the complaints received by the Council during 2013-2014. A report summarising all complaints received by the Council is presented to the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis to be noted and to give Members the opportunity to identify any concerns going forward.

It was generally agreed by Members that the findings of the complaints report demonstrated that the Council took a robust approach to complaints and with only 75 Stage 1 complaints being received in the past year, was largely encouraging. It was questioned whether there was any common trend in those Service areas that had received a number of complaints, to which it was confirmed that there were no obvious issues highlighted that needed to be addressed. Overall we were happy with the Council's approach to dealing with and recording complaints.

It was suggested that it would be useful if future reports could provide information benchmarking the level of complaints received by the Council against those received by other similar authorities. However, overall the Committee were happy with the content of the report and agreed that it should be noted.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

26. Mole Valley Local Cycling Plan

The Committee received a report from the Local Cycle Plan Working Group setting out the proposed Local Cycling Plan for Mole Valley. Members were asked for their observations or recommendations which would be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the item on 7th October 2014.

As many of the comments made by those Members in attendance at the meeting, such as improving the provision and maintenance of cycle paths across the District and managing the number of unauthorised cycle events, fell within the remit of other organisations, it was acknowledged that partnership working would be key factor underpinning the success of the plan.

Other areas which Members felt the plan should address included the continued promotion of safety measures for children cycling to and from school such as Bike-Ability, how the plan would be publicised and brought to the attention of cyclists. It was also questioned whether there were any plans to improve the inclusivity of cycling in the deprived areas of the District.

One major area of concern which was raised by a number of Members was the interaction between cyclists, horse riders and dog walkers. The general consensus amongst the Members who commented on this issue felt that the plan should place greater emphasis on resolving the problems in this area and it was agreed that these concerns along with the other previously mentioned items would be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the item on 7th October 2014.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be relayed to the Executive during their consideration of the report.

27. Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014 - 2015

The Chairman advised the Committee that the confirmed membership for the Affordable Housing Panel and the Planning Enforcement Panel would be as follows:-

Affordable Housing Panel	Planning Enforcement Panel
Howard Jones	Mary Cooper
Paul Potter	Rosemary Dickson
Sarah Seed	Valerie Homewood

Philippa Shimmin	Bridget Lewis-Carr
Peter Stanyard	Corinna Osborne-Patterson

It was agreed that the terms of reference for these Panel's would be distributed to the members of the Committee and providing their were no significant concerns it would be left to the Corporate Head of Service for Democratic Services in conjunction with the Chairman to agree the final version.

Resolved: That the contents of the report are noted.