

**COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER AND ORGANISATIONAL SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 11th July, 2017

Present:-

Councillor P Innes (Chair)

Councillors Borrell
Flood

Councillors Sarvent
Niblock

Councillor Brunt +++

Councillor Huckle ++

Councillor J Innes +

Damon Bruce, Head of Customer Services +

Kate Harley, HR Manager ++

Charlotte Kearsey, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

Brian Offiler, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

Rachel O'Neil, Customers, Commissioning and Change Manager ++++

Paul Radcliffe, Operational Benefits Manager +

Anthony Radford, Venues Manager +++

+ Attended for Minute No. 4

++ Attended for Minute No. 5

+++ Attended for Minute No. 6

++++ Attended for Minute Nos. 4 and 5

**1 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.**

No declarations of interest were received.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Lisa Collins.

3 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee held on 21 March, 2017 were presented.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES AND CUSTOMERS - PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

The Head of Customer Services and the Operational Benefits Manager gave a presentation to update the Committee on the implementation of Universal Credit (UC).

Implementation of Universal Credit (UC) had commenced for new claims from single young people in March 2015 and was due to be rolled out for all new claims and changes in circumstances in November 2017, with migration of all other claims due between 2018 and 2021. Arvato staff were working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Council's housing staff to manage the increased workloads and to mitigate the impacts on households as far as possible.

The report referred to the steps being taken to maximise the award of UC. These steps included:

- Continued involvement of the Benefits Advisor to examine benefit awards to ensure people were receiving their full entitlements;
- Collaborative working with outside agencies and the DWP was being encouraged to identify further risks for claimants;
- Further to the separation of Housing Benefit from Council Tax Support the Take-Up Officer post was created to ensure that those entitled were utilising Council Tax Support;
- Cases with incorrect benefits awards to be referred to the DWP for correction;

- Further officers to be trained in providing personal budgeting support to those claiming UC;
- Routine interrogation of UC breakdowns to identify when the rent element had been omitted to assist with the level of arrears as a result of UC;
- It was confirmed that the Council could request managed payments of the housing element of UC be made to it by DWP as landlord where there was the potential for tenants to fall in to arrears;
- Vulnerable tenants affected by under occupancy, benefit cap and UC to be targeted so additional support could be provided.

Members questioned the Head of Customer Services, the Operational Benefits Manager and the Customers, Commissioning and Change Manager on a range of matters, including the level of arrears that must be reached before officers become involved. The Head of Customer Services explained officers stepped in once arrears were identified.

It was explained that payment allocation on accounts did not take place, and it was therefore not expected to be possible to separate rent add-ons, such as water rates, from rent arrears. The Head of Customer Services agreed to investigate this further.

Members also considered whether mobile libraries contained computer equipment which could be used to apply for UC. It was thought that this would not be the case as applying for UC was a very time consuming process. Members emphasised that accessibility to UC was a very important issue.

The Chair thanked the Head of Customer Services, the Operational Benefits Manager and the Customer, Commissioning and Change Manager for their input to the meeting and their proactive work on the topic.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a progress report be submitted to the Committee in November, 2017.

5 CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION - PROGRESS REPORT ON WORKFORCE FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and the Human Resources Manager reported to the Committee progress made in the development of the Council's Workforce Strategy.

It was reported that the Workforce Strategy had been revised with increased focus on the Investor in People (IiP) themes, and that the Council's IiP accreditation had been extended until January 2018.

The Human Resources Manager updated the Committee of the monthly Workforce Strategy Group meeting. The strategy group had discussed various topics such as:

- What makes a good manager;
- What makes team meetings work well;
- Spans of control - how teams are structured, sized and organised.

Further to the contribution of the Workforce Strategy Group talent management was being examined along with the introduction of a communication route for core brief communications to be delivered throughout the workforce.

Members were informed that Aspire Learning, the online learning platform, had been implemented and currently included over 70 online courses. Further to previous consideration online appraisals had been introduced which would provide greater transparency to ensure that appraisals would link to corporate objectives.

A commercial skills training pilot had been run for Venues and Visitor Information staff and it was hoped to extend this in to other services.

The procurement process for the provision of apprenticeships training had begun. It was confirmed that the Council would be required to have an average of 23 apprentices each year, either new apprentices or upskilling opportunities for existing employees.

Members questioned the Human Resources Manager regarding how the talent management work would be undertaken and they were advised that senior management had been tasked to consider individual training needs with middle and junior managers, in addition to the need to be conscious of management skills in the recruitment process.

Members praised the efforts of the Human Resources Manager and the Council in taking on both positive and negative staff feedback. The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation, the Human Resources Manager and the Customer, Commissioning and Change Manager for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That a progress report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

6 CABINET MEMBER FOR TOWN CENTRES AND VISITOR ECONOMY - CULTURAL VENUES

The Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy and the Arts and Venues Manager reported to the Committee on the cultural venues operated by Chesterfield Borough Council.

Details of activity and income levels at the Pomegranate theatre, the Winding Wheel conference and events venue, Hasland Village Hall and the Assembly Rooms were provided. The broad programmes at the venues and the positive results of the annual user survey were brought to the Committee's attention.

The Arts and Venues Manager advised of the target to develop a business plan for venues to be operating to a zero deficit by 2020/21. To achieve this target a number of priorities had been identified:

- Considering capital investment opportunities to increase income streams;
- Seeking to develop and increase audiences;

- Digital aspects - seeking to install WiFi at venues and increased online ticket purchasing;
- Greater contribution to health and wellbeing via improving accessibility to performances through having audio descriptions, signed performances, dementia friendly screenings and enhanced disabled facilities.

It was noted that consideration was being given to a programme of events in 2018 to celebrate the centenary of the end of World War I.

In response to Members' questions it was explained that:

- It was only possible to estimate numbers attending hired events (i.e. for non-ticketed events or where tickets were sold by the organisation hiring the venue- e.g. Retail awards, school performances);
- The pantomime was the most profitable of the theatre's performances;
- Well attended shows provided a significant contribution to the fund for future improvements through the Theatre Restoration Levy (£1.50 per ticket).
- There was potential for growth across the Pomegranate and Winding Wheel venues;
- The aim was to provide a range of types of performance, including contemporary entertainment, through approaching and being approached by promoters and undertaking a procurement exercise for the pantomime.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy and the Arts and Venues Manager for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the report be noted.

- (2) That a progress report be submitted to the Committee in January, 2018.

7 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 August – 30 November, 2017.

RESOLVED -

That the Forward Plan be noted.

8 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations monitoring schedule. It was noted that updates on the crime and disorder items on the schedule would be provided to the Committee's meeting in September.

RESOLVED -

That the Scrutiny monitoring report be noted.

9 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE COMMUNITY, CUSTOMER AND ORGANISATIONAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the list of items included on its Work Programme for 2017/18.

It was requested that information be included in the Community Safety Partnership report at the September meeting on actions being taken to deal with travellers camping on Council land, including preventing their return.

The Chair updated the Committee that following further discussion of the corporate considerations arising from the recommendations of the Friends Groups Scrutiny Project Group it was hoped that a revised report could be finalised by the Project Group to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee in September.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the work programme be approved.
- (2) That information be included in the Community Safety Partnership report at the September meeting on actions being taken to deal with travellers camping on Council land, including preventing their return, and that appropriate officers and agencies be invited to attend.
- (3) That consideration of the Friends Groups Scrutiny Project Group report be included in the work programme for September, 2017.