

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

6 March 2012

Present:

Councillor Mitchell (Chair)

Councillors Thompson, Branston, Choules, Clark, Crow, Hobden, Morris, Mottram, Newcombe, Tippins and Wardle

Also present:

Strategic Director, Assistant Director Business Transformation, Assistant Director Economy, Assistant Director Environment, Acting Assistant Director Housing and Contracts, Leisure Facilities Manager and Member Services Officer (HB)

In attendance:

Councillor RM Hannaford - Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Involvement

Councillor Sheldon - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure

Representing Parkwood Leisure

Jeremy Wright - Exeter Contract Manager
Charlotte Tregedeon - Manager Riverside Leisure Centre
Peter Cheeseman - Manager Clifton Hill Leisure Centre

19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2012 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

20 Declaration of Interests

Members declared the following personal and (*prejudicial) interests:-

COUNCILLOR	MINUTE
Councillor Mottram	*24 (his company undertakes work for Parkwood Leisure)
Councillor Morris	24 (husband holds Leisure Centre Membership with Parkwood Leisure)

21 Performance Housing Digest - Quarter III

The responses of the Acting Head of Housing and Contracts Services to Members' queries on performance information are set out below. Members were reminded that, whilst it was correct to challenge performance that did not meet the agreed targets, in general terms, the Housing team was performing highly in many areas of its work. Also, through the systems thinking approach, the validity of some of the performance measures were now being challenged.

- the average turn around for a void property was currently 26.9 days, the target being 21 days. Regular meetings were being held with Mears, the Contractor, to improve responses;
- the number of vacant garages had been reduced from 89 in the last quarter to 67 following extensive advertising of availability in the tenants' newsletter, newsagents' windows, Express and Echo etc. A mapping exercise of all Council garages would be undertaken in the next financial year and consideration given to alternative use of sites;
- the average time from referral to job issue for disabled adaptations for large jobs was now 53 weeks. This was due to the priority jobs being completed and it was now possible to carry out works for those tenants with a lower priority;
- the terms of the repairs contract included reference to remedial works to be undertaken by the contractor in respect of any accidental damage. These terms differed in respect of the contractor installing photo-voltaic panels; and
- City Council officers inspected void works on completion before signing off the contract.

Scrutiny Committee - Community supported the proposal that the 9am deadline for submitting questions on the Housing Digest to Member Services be discontinued.

22 **Parkwood Leisure Management Contract**

Councillor Mottram declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the meeting during consideration of this matter as his company undertook work for Parkwood Leisure.

Councillor Morris declared a personal interest as her husband holds Leisure Centre membership with Parkwood Leisure.

The Chair welcomed Jeremy Wright, Parkwood's Exeter Contract Manager and Charlotte Tregedeon and Peter Cheeseman, Managers of the Riverside and Clifton Hill Leisure Centres respectively. The Parkwood representatives responded, as follows, to Members' queries and comments on performance information:-

- staff closely monitored centre users to ensure that wristbands were worn and there was increased vigilance to prevent members from lending cards to friends. The Police had recently been called to eject four individuals who had become abusive on being challenged for not wearing wristbands. Access control systems were shortly to be fitted;
- new software would facilitate the provision of photo cards;
- apologies were given for Parkwood representatives not meeting Councillors at the Clifton Hill reception on 5 March 2012 prior to the Customer Forum on that night. The Centre was very busy in the evenings and the squash court was the only free space available for the meeting although the space would not have been set up until numbers attending were known. Notices advertising the Forum stated that it would be open to all and, in future, an email would be sent to all members online to notify them of Forum meetings; and
- verbal complaints were logged in the Duty Manager's file for inputting onto a customer complaint schedule and forwarding to the City Council's Leisure Facilities Manager on the 12th of each month. Wherever possible, comments/complaints were addressed immediately.

The Assistant Director Economy presented the report advising Members on progress in improving the customer comments procedures and proposing future initiatives to encourage more customer feedback. A further, tabled report, advised of the provision

of customer comment notice boards at all sites by mid March which, along with the planned programme of Customer Forums, would hopefully generate increased interest in making comments. Reports on the nature of complaints and the actions taken would be published monthly at each Centre and presented to the proposed working group of Members, officers and Parkwood representatives.

The latter report also set out the following options to determine customer views:-

- (a) engaging casual staff to undertake Council led exit surveys at 6/12 month intervals at a cost of £5,000 per survey;
- (b) independent customer research programme, costs varying from £10,727, £14,185 and £17,885; and
- (c) installation of a Govmetric System at all sites, excluding the golf course, the total cost being £10,500 together with £5,775 per annum to service.

Many Members felt that the extra cost of undertaking surveys should not be incurred and that, in the first instance, the proposed working group should meet to consider the complaints being received and the position reviewed after six months.

The Leisure Facilities Manager confirmed that complaints had increased since Parkwood had taken over the contract but stressed that the systems operated by the previous operator for obtaining customer feedback may not have been as robust.

Scrutiny Committee - Community:-

- (1) supported the establishment of a working group to meet with Parkwood representatives to develop its service and enhance its facilities and achieve a level of service delivery well above the contractual baseline;
- (2) agreed to a monthly pattern of meetings of the working group initially, the agenda to focus on contractual issues, monitoring customer comments and the relevant action taken and agreeing service improvement initiatives with the minutes reported to this Committee;
- (3) supported the following composition for the Working Group:-
 - the Chair of this Committee;
 - the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure;
 - a representative from each political party;
 - the Assistant Director Economy;
 - the Leisure Facilities Manager; and
 - representatives from Parkwood Leisure; and
- (4) supported the proposal that the initial options relating to obtaining customer feedback, as set out in the report, be revisited after the first six months of the operation of the working group.

(Report circulated)

23 **Systems Thinking**

The Assistant Director Business Transformation and the Acting Assistant Director Housing and Contracts updated Members on the progress with the Systems Review work being undertaken by the Council.

The former explained the Vanguard methodology and how the Council as an organisation was learning new ways of addressing customers' needs and learning about how systems work in order to improve the Council's responses. It heralded a move away from a functional approach with an emphasis on external targets to one based on the end to end experience for the customer. The latter illustrated the new approach as applied to Repairs. The two other areas under review were Customer Services, Benefits, Council Tax and Housing Advice and Planning.

Officers emphasised the importance of work being done to develop meaningful measures of performance to allow real time improvements to be made. Members indicated their support for working in a way that was focused on customers.

Scrutiny Committee – Community thanked the officers for their presentation.

24 **Community Toilets Working Group**

The Assistant Director Environment updated Members on the progress of the Community Toilets Working Group and highlighted some of the key points developing in regard to public toilet provision.

Members noted that the Working Group planned to visit Oxford, a comparator City, with a University and of a similar size to Exeter and which was one of the few Districts to have introduced a Community Toilets scheme.

Scrutiny Committee - Community:-

- (1) noted the interim report and progress made to date; and
- (2) supported the submission of a further report on the findings and recommendations of the working group to a future meeting of this Committee.

(Report circulated)

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION BY EXECUTIVE

25 **Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2012-15**

The Housing Resident Involvement Manager presented the report seeking approval for the Resident Involvement Strategy 2012-15. She explained the relationship between her role and that of the Neighbourhood Management Team and how both dovetailed with the work of the Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer. Her focus was on engagement and feedback of tenants and leaseholders and how the service was delivered with the Neighbourhood Team focussing on the wider development of the community.

The Acting Assistant Director Housing and Contracts advised that corporate complaints relating to housing matters would no longer be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman but would be resolved at a local level. Where this could not be achieved reference would be made to the Housing Ombudsman. Referring to this regulatory requirement within the Localism Act for a "democratic filter" to be developed to resolve complaints, he advised that a decision was yet to be made on the precise mechanism. Use of the Tenants and Leaseholders Committee or its Performance Review Sub Committee were possible mechanisms.

Scrutiny Committee - Community:-

- (1) noted the report;
- (2) requested Executive to approve the Housing Resident and Involvement Strategy 2012-15; and
- (3) requested the annual submission of progress reports against the action plan.

(Report circulated)

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

26 Streamlining of Bring Bank Sites

The Assistant Director Environment presented the report advising Members of the proposal to examine the streamlining of the bring bank operation in order to focus on materials other than those already collected from each home, release resources to improve the cleanliness and appearance of the bring sites and improve the efficiency of the service.

Members supported the principle of the proposals. They were advised that additional green bins for recycling were provided to residents on request free of charge and additional black bins for residual waste were available to larger families. In response to a Member's question, he stated that whilst a local authority could charge for waste receptacles, there were many complications and disadvantages in so doing and it was not something being proposed.

Scrutiny Committee – Community supported the proposal to streamline the bring bank operation and increase the range of banks for re-cyclates that are not collected from homes.

(Report circulated)

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

27 Housing Revenue Account Stewardship to December 2011

The Strategic Director advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the outturn forecast for the first six months of the financial year up to 31 December 2011. During this period, the total of the variances indicated that there would be a net surplus of £1,665,990 which would be transferred to the working balance as at 31 March 2012. This represented an increase of £1,166,600 compared to the budgeted reduction to the working balance of £499,390. It was estimated that the working balance would stand at £5,082,541 at 31 March 2012.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

(Report circulated)

28 Community Services Stewardship to 31 December 2011

The Strategic Director advised Members of any major differences by management unit to the revised budget. The current forecast suggested that net expenditure for this Committee would decrease from the revised budget by a total of £187,560, which represented a variation of 1.7% from the revised budget.

A Member requested that the charging policy relating to graffiti removal from private properties be reviewed.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report.

(Report circulated)

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.25 pm

Chair