

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 2 October 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor Kelly, in the Chair.

Councillor Winter, Vice Chair.

Councillors Ian Bowyer (substituting for Councillor Johnson), Corvid, Hendy, Mrs Pengelly (substituting for Councillor Ms Watkin), Tuffin (substituting for Councillor Derrick) Vincent and Wogens.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Johnson (Councillor Ian Bowyer substituting), Councillor Ms Watkin (Councillor Mrs Pengelly substituting) and Councillor Derick (Councillor Tuffin substituting)

Also in attendance: Helen Cocks (Customer Liaison Manager), Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene), Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Phillip Robinson (Service Lead, Street Scene and Waste), Katrina Houghton (Head of Service Street Scene and Waste), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning), Phil Rudin (Strategic Contracts Manager), Ralph Bint (Facilities Manager), Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Paul Looby (Head of Financial Reporting and Planning), Niki Clark (Finance Business Partner) Faye Hambleton (Service Director for Customer Services and Service Centre), Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager, Andy Ralphs (Strategic Director for Customer and Corporate Services) and Jamie Sheldon (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 5.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

71. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct.

72. Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2019.

73. Chair's Urgent Business

To facilitate good meeting management the Chair asked the Committee if they were happy to change the order of the agenda and take the Analysis of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2018/19 item, before the Street Services item.

The Committee agreed to change the order of the agenda.

74. **Analysis of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2018/19**

Helen Cocks (Customer Liaison Manager) presented the Analysis of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2018/19 to the Committee –

Every year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) sent each council an annual review letter which outlined the Ombudsman's position in relation to complaints monitoring.

The publication of the 2018/19 annual report provided an opportunity to review and discuss complaints that have been received about Plymouth during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The briefing provided analysis of the LGSCO annual review data and presented an annual summary for Plymouth comparing our local statistics with the relative benchmarks. It also highlighted the lessons learned, how individual teams and services have responded to LGSCO complaints and what the Council had done differently following LGSCO intervention.

After investigation, the LGSCO upheld 18 complaints of the 107 complaints they had made decisions about in relation to Plymouth City Council.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (a) The total amount of compensation that was paid out due to upheld complaints 2018/19 compared to the previous year;
- (b) The definition of a Discretionary Payment Action (DPA) and what the process/procedure would be;
- (c) The importance of apologising to customers when resolving their complaints;
- (d) The amount of time that are spent by each department resolving complaints and the cost implications of this.

The Committee –

1. approved the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

- Monitor performance against Service Standards;
- Provide guidance and training for staff undertaking investigations (Stage 1 and Stage 2);

- Review, approve and communicate the Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

2. noted the progress made to date and approved the proposals set out in paragraph 2.4 of this Report.

- Monitor performance against Service Standards;
- Provide guidance and training for staff undertaking investigations (Stage 1 and Stage 2);
- Review, approve and communicate the Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

75. **Street Services**

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene), Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Phillip Robinson (Service Lead, Street Scene and Waste), Katrina Houghton (Head of Service Street Scene and Waste), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) and Phil Rudin (Strategic Contracts Manager) presented the Street services report to the Committee –

The 2019/20 budget allocated to Street Services was £18.237 million, split between the three areas detailed below. This included:

- £27.659 million allocated to supplies and service costs
 - £14.132 million allocated to employee costs
 - £37.738 million expected in income.
- (a) There were 344 employees (335.59 FTE) across the two areas of Street Services – Street Scene and Waste, and Plymouth Highways, which was 13.2% of the total Plymouth City Council (PCC) workforce;
 - (b) 6.82% staff turnover (rolling 12 months) – this was lower than the PCC overall turnover rate of 10.73%;
 - (c) There were 12.43 days lost due to staff sickness per FTE on average (rolling 12 months) and the most common cause of both short and long term sickness absence was musculoskeletal;
 - (d) 203 staff had completed training by toolbox talks in Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS);
 - (e) Street Services was the most complimented service between 1 April and 31 August 2019, receiving 44% (94) of all compliments received by PCC;
 - (f) 1,973 complaints received by Street Services between 1 April and 31 August 2019, the majority of which related to waste services. This is a reduction of 42.7% on the number received in the same period last year (3,441);

- (g) 84.4% of complaints were closed within the service level agreement (SLA) timeframe of 10 working days;
- (h) Almost half (49.7%) of all complaints were upheld, representing a fault with the service delivered by PCC;
- (i) The most common reason for a complaint being upheld was the standard of service not meeting customer expectations (39.3% of all upheld complaints);
- (j) Street Services offered a universal service that was used by more than 120,000 households in the city. Therefore, the proportion of complaints received was approximately 0.3% of the customer base each month;
- (k) 235 Stage 2 complaints were received (84.0% were closed within the timeframe; 70.7% upheld);
- (l) 14 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaints were received – this was 36.8% of the total LGO complaints received by PCC.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (m) Whether Wheelie Bins could be used to collect garden waste as this would be easier on the crews and could save money in the long run having to replace Garden Waste Bags;
- (n) The Weed strategy and the timeline for seeing improvements and savings as part of this plan;
- (o) Raised concerns about Glyphosate Weed Killer and discussed the policy/guidelines for using this product;
- (p) Reassurance that the improvements that were being put in place for the Mayflower 2020 event would be sustainable long term;
- (q) Why vehicle maintenance costs had fallen significantly considering it had been identified as an ageing fleet. Members requested this item returned for further scrutiny;
- (r) How Plymouth could improve their street cleanliness to ensure they were no longer below the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) average?
- (s) The high volume of complaints received by Street Services between 1 April and 31 August 2019 (1,973) , the majority of which related to waste services;
- (t) The benefits the department were seeing from using In-cab technology and whether it would save the council money in the future;
- (u) What challenges Plymouth faced in improving recycling rates to meet the national average;

- (v) The benefits of having service standards defined and communicated clearly to members and members of the public to cut down the number of complaints;
- (w) Concerns were raised about the number of complaints/issues outstanding regarding trees and what plans were in place to reduce this;
- (x) Problem hotspots for flooding in the city and if a document could be circulated outlining the main areas;
- (y) The guarantee Plymouth City Council have that work undertaken by South West Highways would be inspected and if standards were not met they would be repaired again with no additional cost.

Members noted the report and requested that -

1. The Grass Cutting schedules and Flooding Hotspots be circulated to all Councillors;
2. Clear communication be provided about what we do provide as service and what the service standards are for work being completed;
3. The Fleet and Garage Services Review/ update on in cab technology be added to the Work Programme for further scrutiny;
4. Blue badges be added to the Work Programme.

76. **Climate Emergency/Carbon Reduction Plan (internal perspective)** (Verbal Report)

Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene), Kat Deeney (Head of Environmental Planning) and Ralph Bint (Facilities Manager) presented the Climate Emergency/Carbon Reduction Plan (internal perspective) to the Committee -

The following key points were highlighted to Members:

- (a) secured £500,000 of EU funding to explore integration of new technology and innovative purchasing arrangement for solar power projects;
- (b) worked with Urban Splash to finalise plans for the ground source heat pumps and district heat solutions;
- (c) secured EU grant to develop new transport plans consistent with our net zero ambitions;
- (d) secured £1/4million grant package to promote EV charging infrastructure

The accommodation strategy phase I would -

- (e) Create clusters, grouping staff with functional and directorate linkages, whilst enabling flexible working to suit service and customer needs, embracing work anywhere culture where appropriate;
- (f) Use location to make services efficient and convenient for customers, clients and partners;
- (g) Create modern customer and working environments to facilitate high productivity and wellbeing;
- (h) 6/10 average desk ratio, consistent but not uniform, using buildings as efficiently as possible whilst reducing sqm used;
- (i) Create flexibility in our accommodation to support culture change, partnership working and commercial income generation;
- (j) To realise and maximise revenue benefits through releasing at least one corporate building from PCC staff use.

A high level estate audit had been commissioned to evaluate the fitness for purpose of the estate having regard to service requirements, premises running costs and maintenance requirements in order to identify opportunities to achieve efficiencies and improve service delivery.

Plans to move to electronic fleet servicing all areas of Council services. Changing 61 of the existing PCC diesel fleet to EV equivalents. This would save 1000 tonnes of CO2 over the 8 year asset life. This was equivalent to: taking over 400 cars off the road for a year, over 650 return flights from London to New York, electricity offset from 1250 homes for a year.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (k) Whether officers writing reports across the organisation had an understanding what causes carbon and how knowledge surrounding this could be improved;
- (l) The costs associated with Climate Emergency/Carbon Reduction Plan and were keen to monitor once the full plan had been produced.
 - a. The Committee noted the Climate Emergency/Carbon Reduction Plan (internal perspective) report.

77. **Revenue Monitoring - Month Five**

Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Paul Looby (Head of Financial Reporting and Planning), Niki Clark (Finance Business Partner) Faye Hambleton (Service Director for Customer Services and Service Centre) and Pete Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager) presented the Revenue Monitoring - Month Five report to the Committee -

the projected revenue overspend was £3.318m against a revenue budget of £185.483m which was a variance of 1.80%. The context of this was needing to

deliver in excess of £17m of savings in 2019/20 on the back of balancing the 2018/19 revenue budget where £11m of net revenue reductions were successfully delivered.

The Children Young People and Families Service were reporting a budget pressure of £2.803m at month 4. The cost of the care was particularly high due to the level of support needed to keep young people safe, such as specialist residential care placements with high levels of staffing and the need to place young people with complex needs in wrap around as no suitable placement was available.

Community Connections was reporting a (£0.450m) favourable variation at month 4, a change of (£0.200m) month 3. At this time, B&B numbers were being reduced, from those reported during 2018/19, through the use of alternative placements secured in existing contracts. This was being achieved and maximised through partnership working with the Alliance.

The budget for the Office of the Director of Public Health (ODPH) was forecasting to come in on budget for 2019/20.

The budget was made up of:

- (a) Public Health, which was grant funded and forms part of the Integrated Fund;
- (b) Public Protection Service; and Bereavement Services.

Customer and Corporate – ICT Commissioned Service were reporting a number of budget pressures. Several budgets were lower than required; Unitary Charge £0.720m, PADS £0.066m and Payroll £0.074m.

Fleet and Garage were reporting to budget but had a risk of £0.034m. This related to a £0.026m gap against a previous savings target, and a £0.008m pressure due to the requirement for a new fuel system. There was also a risk around their £0.050m additional savings target, although delivery plans were being worked on to help meet this that rely on client account savings.

The key areas of questioning from Members related to –

- (c) Whether there were plans in place to deal with the potential budgetary pressures resulting from Brexit;
- (d) The budgetary pressures in the Corporate Services directorate, and questioned what plans were in places regarding the Transformation Review and the Service Centre;
- (e) What the timescales and deadlines were for trying to meeting the savings targets outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- (f) Whether achieving the targets set out by each directorate would mean the budget would be balanced.

Members requested an update on the reserves and plans in place to replenish them be provided.

The Committee noted the month five monitoring position.

78. **Work Programme**

Members agreed to add the Fleet and Garage Services Review to the Work Programme.

79. **Tracking Decisions**

The Committee noted its progress against the Tracking Decisions.