

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 5 October 2021

Present:

Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Jeremy Pert
Tina Clements	Bernard Peters
Gill Heath (Vice-Chairman (Scrutiny))	Samantha Thompson
Jeremy Oates	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman (Overview))

Apologies: Colin Greatorex and Bob Spencer

PART ONE

14. Declarations of Interest

None declared at the meeting.

15. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021

The minutes would be submitted to the next meeting for approval

16. Customer Feedback and Complaints Service – Corporate Annual Report 2020 - 21

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which provided details of corporate complaints activity between April 2020 and March 2021. The Complaints, School Appeals and Access to Information Manager outlined that there were different processes and regulations for each type of complaint, and the statutory Adults and Children’s complaints annual reports had been considered by Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee in August 2021. She outlined the Corporate Customer Feedback and Complaints Service Annual Report detailing the corporate complaints and enquiries which highlighted trends and themes in service delivery. The Report also discussed the Highways ‘report it’ process where members of the public were asked to report a wide range of concerns on a day to day basis.

In response to members questions the following comments and responses were noted:

- The complaints procedure was available both online and via dedicated telephone lines. Support was available to help people with digital 'report it' enquiries. The Report It System was being reviewed by the Highways Team to ensure timely response to enquiries.
- The Report highlighted that there was an increase in MP enquiries and a disproportionate number of complaints particularly relating to highways maintenance.
- Councillor enquiries: Councillors received several enquiries/complaints daily it was suggested that many more enquiries were made and dealt with than were recorded. It was acknowledged that Councillors had other forums and mechanisms to raise issues, and that people may complain to members about changes in processes, but that there was a difference between a policy change and a complaint about poor performance. It was recommended that more work be considered on how to record complaints and enquiries to Councillors.
- Concerns were raised about level of communication between MPs, Councillors and complainant. It was recognised that District and County should work together and that complaints about the same issue should be recorded as one enquiry. It was noted that MP process was an enquiry not a complaint.
- Outcome of complaints: Members understood the importance of informing people of outcomes and if there was a recommendation to look at the process for service improvement as part of the lessons learnt. It was confirmed that the Leader, Monitoring Officer and CEO monitor and ensure complaints were monitored and reported.
- In relation to benchmarking complaints against other Local Authorities (LAs) members noted that the ombudsman carried out benchmarking and that SCC has performed very well. This was attributed to the senior leadership team learning from complaints and being open to challenge. It was noted that the Local Authority used the evidence available from Complaints and Representations to inform service improvements.

The Chairman thanked the Leader and officer for the detailed report and for the excellent service and professional manner of the Complaints Team.

Resolved: That the Corporate Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, of 2020/21 be noted

17. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-22 Update

The Committee considered the 2021-22 Work Programmes as presented for Corporate, Health and Care, Prosperous and Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Each of the Chairs present was invited to present their programme of work and the detail behind the inclusion of the items.

The following comments were noted:

- The link to the recording of the Health and Care O&S Committees session 'Introduction to Mental Health' 21 October 2021 to be shared with all members.
- Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be invited to attend the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny meeting when considering Infrastructure and Lighting for Staffordshire Performance Review and Highways Infrastructure Transformation.
- Cross cutting topics should be considered jointly by Overview and Scrutiny Committees where remits crossover to engage as many members as possible on key topics.

Resolved: that the work programme reports be noted.

18. Work Programme

The Scrutiny and Support Manager outlined the current Work Programme 2021-22 and advised that the following additional items had been added to the next meeting agenda as pre-decision scrutiny reports:

- VCSE capacity building recommission
- Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan

Resolved: That the work programme was noted.

Chairman

