

OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

17 January 2017

Present: Councillor T Williams (Chair)
Councillor A Rindl (Vice-Chair)
Councillors S Bolton, J Dhindsa (for minute numbers 21 and 22),
K Hastrick, A Joynes and P Kent

Also present: Councillor Sarah Nelmes (Three Rivers District Council)

Officers: ICT Client Section Head
Shared Director of Finance
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)
Parking Services Manager
Transport and Infrastructure Section Head

22 Apologies for Absence/ Committee membership

There was one change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Bolton replaced Councillor Cavinder.

The Chair advised that Councillor Nelmes was in attendance representing Three Rivers District Council. An arrangement was in place where Three Rivers councillors could attend Watford scrutiny meetings where shared services were under discussion. The Panel agreed that Councillor Nelmes could speak at the meeting.

23 Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2016 were submitted and signed.

Parking Enforcement Annual Report

The Panel received a report of the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head, including the 2015-2016 Annual Parking Enforcement Report.

The Parking Manager introduced the report and advised that the annual report was required under the Traffic Management Act in order to ensure transparency. The covering report provided an overview of work being undertaken by officers including details of the retendering process.

There was a discussion about the potential relocation of the parking shop. It was envisaged that most of the services could be moved online. Much of the footfall into the shop was for the purchase of visitor vouchers, and in future virtual vouchers would be available to purchase online. A phased closure of the shop had been agreed by Leadership Team. The exact timing of the potential move to the Town Hall was unclear as the lease expired before the contract ended. Members of the public would be encouraged to use the self-service kiosks in the Town Hall, although officers would be available to assist if required.

It was noted that there had been a gradual increase in the number of penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued in the last few years. Officers advised that there had been a general trend towards fewer PCNs being issued compared to pre-2012-13. The introduction of further Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) had led to a slight increase but it was now levelling off.

In response to concerns raised about the differentiation between signage for pay and display bays and residents' bays in certain parts of the Borough, it was agreed that the Traffic Engineer would contact the councillor concerned to consider the issue further.

Members discussed the recent consultation with residents in Callowland about the possibility of introducing a CPZ. It was noted that the proposals had been contentious in some areas and that some residents would like a CPZ to cover the early evening only. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development drew a comparison with Oxhey where there had also been significant support for a scheme but greater opposition. Should further consultations take place, there was a danger the residents would feel the council was attempting to impose a scheme. A limited scheme, such as the one suggested, could be possible but was unlikely to be imminent.

The Panel discussed the recent approaches to tackling blue badge fraud. Officers explained that Operation Clamp used to be undertaken jointly with the Police and the Parking Shop every three months, depending on Police availability. The operation was now run by the Fraud team alongside the Police. Consideration

was being given to using an external company to run the operations instead. The company in question had a strong record of detecting fraudulent use of blue badges. Cases would then be widely publicised as a deterrent.

Officers explained the reasons why a number of PCNs were written off each year. These included a small number of foreign vehicles, where enforcement was not possible, and a larger number of persistent offenders who had failed to correctly register their vehicle with the DVLA. Continuing the discussion, the reasons that the council lost appeals were outlined to the Panel which included an explanation of the processes by which cases went to appeal, when the council had sight of the appellant's evidence and how the adjudicator came to a decision.

Considering the potential for including benchmarking information in the report, officers explained that the Traffic Penalty Tribunal no longer produced an annual report which was an important source of benchmarking data. Figures were difficult to come by and officers had had to submit Freedom of Information requests to other councils in the past. Data from neighbouring authorities was available but not a useful comparison. It was agreed that data from the previous year at comparable authorities could be included in future annual reports

Following a request, it was agreed that the breakdown of income by car park could be provided to the Panel.

Reviewing the cost of the contract in previous years, the query was raised about the increase in 2014/15 compared to other years. Officers undertook to find out what accounted for this increase.

The use of town centre car parks by residents in the evening was proposed and officers confirmed that CitiParks were putting plans in place to make this available at Gade, Sutton and Church car parks. Councillors would be kept informed about progress.

The Portfolio Holder recorded his thanks to the officers in the parking shop for a very successful and well managed service. Replies to queries were always detailed and logical demonstrating expertise and sensitivity.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Panel note the annual parking report.
2. the actions requested be undertaken.

The Panel received a report of the ICT Client Section Head providing an overview of the ICT service delivery model.

Introducing the report, the ICT Client Section Head provided the context to the current service. The service was now mixed with some aspects outsourced to Amicus and others delivered by an in-house team. The aim was that Amicus would resolve 80% of reported faults via the Service Desk and the in-house team would resolve the remainder. Agreements were in place about which type calls the service desk should be able to resolve. It had been expected that the figure of 80% would not be reached during the first year. Following the contract with Capita, the service was missing documentation and Amicus was working with the councils to address this. The contract was still new and there was a plan in place to increase the numbers of calls dealt with by Amicus. There had been significant investment in hardware including 90% of the desktop estate, installation of Wi-Fi services and improvements in security. A lot of progress had been made, but there was still much to do.

Responding to questions about timescales, officers reiterated that the contract was still in its infancy and the process of creating the necessary documentation was underway. It was hoped that by the end of the first year Amicus would be able to deal with the target of 80% of calls. Officers underlined that they were very pleased with the progress made in the service. Customer satisfaction ratings were very good and the councils were pleased with the contract.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services emphasised the radical transformation that had taken place; the relationship with Amicus was excellent and a significant improvement on the relationship with Capita.

Discussing the nature of the contract, members were advised that it was somewhat open-ended and Amicus were a good fit for the councils. The service had gone out to tender without the usual documentation and Amicus were happy to work to address this. They were hoping to grow their business and wanted to take on as many of the calls as possible.

Councillors commented on the improved experiences they had had in dealing with the service desk and the ICT service provision more generally.

Drawing comparisons with the previous contract with Capita, assurance was sought that there would not be a repeat of the situation with a failing service. It was underlined that this was a very different type of arrangement and the contract was for a relatively short time-two years with the possibility of a further two-year extension. Officers provided details of the outcome of the exit

negotiations of the contract with Capita. It was emphasised that it was the current ICT service that was under discussion by the Panel, details of the end of the contract with Capita had been discussed at other committees.

Councillor Nelmes referred to a software upgrade that have taken place at Three Rivers which had not gone well and asked whether lessons had been learnt. The ICT Section Head explained what had happened and assured the Panel that an exercise had taken place to consider the lessons learnt. The service were ensuring that any future upgrades would be managed as projects and particular attention would be given to communications, rigorous vendor management and user acceptance testing. It was noted that the upgrade had not been an IT-led project and the service and vendor also had responsibilities.

It was agreed that the ICT service should be added to the work programme for the Panel later in 2017.

RESOLVED -

1. that the Panel note the report.
2. that the actions requested be undertaken.

Chair
Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel

The meeting started at 7.00 p.m.
and finished at 8.35 p.m.