

CUSTOMER, COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 4 July 2016 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room G4, Addenbrook House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT 7

Present: Councillors N England, L Murray, S J Reynolds, P Scott, J Seymour.

Also Present: Cllr. A McClements, Cabinet Member Transport, Customer & Neighbourhood Services (CCPSC-04 and 05); A Astley, Assistant Director Customer & Neighbourhood Services (CCPSC-04 and 05); L Higgins, Customer, Benefits, Registration and Library Services Manager (CCPSC-04); S Jones, Scrutiny Officer; D Proud, Transport & Highways Development Manager (CCPSC-05); K Webb, Customer Contact Centre Group Manager (CCPSC-04); H Wood, Customer Services Project Manager (CCPSC-04); J Tangye, Senior Democratic & Scrutiny Officer.

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming members of the Committee, the Cabinet Member and officers to the meeting. He extended a particular welcome to Cllr Murray who had been appointed to the Committee at Annual Council in May and thanked Cllr Cook for his previous contribution.

CCPSC-01 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs J Ashford, K Guy and B Tillotson and co-optees Paula Doherty and Dave Johnson

CCPSC-02 Declarations of Interest

None

CCPSC-03 Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee held on 26 April 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

CCPSC-04 Customer Services

The Chair introduced the item which was to follow up on the discussion held at the meeting on 26 April 2016.

a) Update on performance data from the customer contact centre (CCC)

The Committee had requested an update on performance of the CCC and considered monthly performance reports for May (Appendix 1) and June (tabled).

Officers presented the reports making the following points:

- A significant amount of work had been done to improve performance of the CCC by the new managers and significant improvements had been made in the abandoned call rate and the longest call waiting times.
- The call abandonment rate for June 2016 had been 10.9%, the best ever in recent history and close to the target rate of 10%. This compared to 28% at the same point last year and peaks of up to 40% over the last 2 years. The target would have been achieved if not for the exceptional volume of calls on the day of the EU Referendum. The contact centre had been staffed up for the referendum but there had been even more calls than anticipated with the phones busy until the CCC closed at 10pm.
- Data on the overall number of calls, abandonment rate, longest wait, longest wait for a call-back and number of call-backs in June was provided and broken down by service area. The vast majority of calls (97.1% of 27,275) had been answered in less than 10 minutes. Only three calls had waited over 25 minutes, a great improvement on a year ago when many customers had waited over an hour.
- There had been good feedback from customers about the improved response. The private sector landlords association and CAB had reported a marked improvement in the response and felt that waiting times were acceptable.
- The call back service had been used by 1,441 customers. The longest wait for a call-back had been 35 minutes 5 seconds. A message advised callers they would be called back by the end of the day but on current data officers were confident the message could be updated to offer a call back within one hour.

The following additional information was then provided in response to questions:

- As to whether customers holding on for a long time were those with more serious problems, it was not necessarily the case. They tended to be people with more time or those who might not trust the call-back service and it was therefore key to build customer confidence in the service.
- Reports on demand from the referendum would be provided to the Elections Service to learn lessons although it was noted that this was an exceptional event. Reports would also be provided on demand from the PCC election which compared very differently. The CCC Group Manager met regularly with service managers (revenues etc.) to give feedback on calls and internal service level agreements were being developed.
- In response to a question about the length of time taken to reply to an email, Members were informed that the response time could depend on whether the email was sent to the CCC or directly to a service area. The CCC service level is to respond to emails within 24 hours but individual service areas may vary the response time. There was no way of monitoring responses from service areas to emails but in future it may be possible to monitor those logged via My Telford.
- In terms of the whether calls were dealt with by the CCC advisor or transferred to a service area, CCC advisors were trained and empowered to deal with different types of enquiry and 98% of calls were dealt at the initial contact by the CCC advisor. However there were odd times when a query needed to be referred to a service area and these were directed to the service manager. The most common reason for a contact was refuse collection. Data could be collected on enquiries

coming through the CCC but enquiries direct to service areas were not monitored centrally. Officers and the Cabinet Member encouraged Members to use the CCC to ensure contacts were logged and could be tracked.

- Reports made via web-forms or apps were logged directly on the CRM system and sent straight to an operative to action. Where relevant the customer would be updated on what action had been taken. The CCC monitors reports made by web-forms and apps as well as contacts via other access channels. A specific issue raised by a Member about a fly tipping report which had not been acted on would be investigated by officers after the meeting.
- It was too early to see the impact of 'channel shift' on reducing calls to the contact centre but data collected by the Policy team showed evidence of a shift towards digital channels for environmental services (missed bin collections, fly-tipping, street lights etc.) where reports could be made online or via apps. The Dashboard could be provided to the Committee. A number of recent or imminent innovations would start to have an impact, notably the launch of My Telford, but also the introduction of live web-chats, voice recognition, the triage system at SW1 and the continued work of front-line customer service advisors in raising awareness and showing customers how to use digital channels. The impact should start to show over the next 4-5 months and further reports could be brought to the Committee.
- The housing benefits team had saved over £4000 by switching to text messaging for non-statutory communication which was quicker and more reliable for officers and for customers, e.g. to chase up missing information, for customers to send documents by email.
- The appetite and expectation of customers for online / digital channels had been evident from the take up of a new online benefits claim form. The service had been 'soft launched' without any publicity and 180 claims had been made in the first month (there were typically 800 new claims per month) showing online was the first port of call for many customers. A communications plan would be developed around the principle of digital by default.
- The average wait time in June was 3 minutes 16 seconds but worst cases were used for reporting purposes because averages could mask poor performance.
- In terms of what had not gone as well as hoped, there had been delays to the launch of Intelligent Voice Recognition (IVR) systems which it had been hoped would be live by now.

When there were no further questions the Chair asked if any members had feedback on their own experience of using the contact centre. It has been suggested at the previous meeting that the committee could be involved with quality monitoring and a pro forma had been circulated for members to record feedback. Experiences were mixed, two calls had been answered in under three minutes and there had been a polite and helpful service; two calls had not been connected and details would be provided to officers to investigate although it was unclear whether the calls were to the contact centre or to the service area. Officers said they would

welcome continued feedback from the Committee over the longer term and Members agreed to continue the quality monitoring exercise.

At the end of the discussion Members noted the reports and remarked on the encouraging improvement in performance, particularly in view of the volume of calls handled by the contact centre which the public may not be aware of.

b) The impact of the closure of First Point at Southwater 1 (SW1) on Saturdays

The Committee had requested information about usage of First Point at SW1 on Saturdays and the impact of the Saturday closure on customers.

Members were provided with the following information:

- The Saturday service at SW1 had ceased in January and customers had been prepared for two months prior to closure.
- The most popular services were benefits and the CAB with customer services getting little footfall. The CAB had made a decision to withdraw the service six months previously and customers had been informed of the closure two months in advance. The main use of the service had been customers informing the benefits service of a change of circumstances. The closure coincided with the introduction of new online benefit forms. Working age customers now tended to use the online form or app and customers of pension age or unemployed were able to access the service during the week.
- The library service was still open and library staff showed customers dropping in on a Saturday how to report changes of circumstance or apply on line, or make appointments for them to come back during the week.
- There had been no tangible impact of the closure on customers and there had been no negative feedback.

Members noted the information and steps taken to mitigate the impact of the closure.

c) Feedback from members on quality monitoring and product testing

The Chair and members gave feedback on three areas of quality monitoring and testing agreed at the last meeting.

- Quality monitoring the contact centre
No further points were raised to the earlier discussion on the contact centre.
- My Telford
The Chair gave feedback on a testing session held on 17 June and thanked officers for facilitating the session. Four members had taken part and worked through a test plan to try out each part of the system. A number of technical glitches had been identified which had been picked up by officers to resolve and there were some suggested improvements which were also fed back to officers. It had been useful to review the system from the perspective of a customer and an elected Member. None of the other members who had taken part were present.

The Chair commended the work that had gone into developing the system which was very good and would benefit residents and the Council. Officers added that

the idea was that non-personal data could also be accessed and used by Town and Parish Councils (e.g. the location of fly tipping reports) to inform and improve services.

The Chair recommended that a Members' Information Seminar should be held for all elected Members prior to launch.

- Intelligent Voice Recognition (IVR) Missed Bins
Officers updated that the IVR was not ready for testing and Members would be notified once the product was ready for testing.

There were no further questions and the officers except the Assistant Director left the meeting.

CCPSC-05 Traffic Management

The Chair introduced the item which was to follow up points discussed at the meeting on 9 November 2015. The Committee had submitted a response to the Cabinet Member and officers supporting the Council's approach not to remove or switch existing traffic lights at roundabouts to part-time operation for safety reasons. However, the Committee had requested an update on the impact of the new signalling technology on traffic flows and journey times.

The Transport & Highways Development Manager gave a presentation highlighting the following points:

- A recap of the issues discussed at the meeting on 9 November which included the range of considerations for deciding the type of traffic control at junctions, the approach to part-time signalling and the steps being taken to improve traffic flows. Junctions were considered case by case and one size did not fit all.
- Improvements since the last meeting included the introduction of demand responsive signalling technology at Lawley (SCOOT), Hollinswood (MOVA), Trench Lock (MOVA) and the establishment of the Urban Traffic Control (UTC) centre which allowed remote operation of SCOOT, fault reports, and remote monitoring via the small network of Council CCTVs.
- Lawley (SCOOT) – pre- and post-scheme journey time surveys showed a total average reduction of 12:11 minutes since the introduction of the scheme, a 20% reduction in the overall survey duration. Nine out of 12 movements surveyed (75%) achieved a time saving. Of the three slower movements, two had to wait over 30 seconds longer. The biggest gain over a single journey was 1:43 minutes (from the A5223 Northbound to Pepper Mill). There had been good feedback from local people and the Parishes.
- Hollinswood (MOVA) – journey time surveys showed a total average saving of 48:13 minutes over pre-scheme counts, a 19% reduction in the overall survey duration, or an average saving per journey of 1:12 minutes with some improved by significantly more time. 75% of movements were faster than previous counts. The biggest single gain was 4:14 minutes (Stafford Park to A442 South). Where there were longer journeys, three out of eight were 30 seconds or below.
- Trench (MOVA) – there was a total average saving of 19:57 minutes over the pre-scheme counts, a 10% reduction in the required journey times. 50% of moves

were faster than previous counts. The biggest single gain was 5:35 minutes (A442 Northbound towards Hadley). Where there were longer journeys, 19 out of 31 were 30 seconds or below. Trench was a complicated interchange with a high volume of traffic. It had taken 5-6 months to implement the scheme and to monitor the impact and make adjustments until it was right. Visibility improvements and a red light campaign would be carried out at the A445-A442 crossing which had been an accident hot spot in the past.

- In terms of work due to be undertaken:
 - MOVA and lane widening at Ketley Brook roundabout (Nov 2016 – Feb 2017) to improve safety and increase capacity for future demand.
 - Lane widening and updated markings at Trench Lock (Nov 2016-Feb 2017).
 - Part-time traffic lights at Randlay roundabout (Nov 2016 - March 2017).
 - Upgrade of UTC (to UTMC) to improve active management of the network.
 - Development of Variable Messaging System (VMS) to provide a wider system of full colour screens to give greater flexibility of traffic management, initially around Telford town centre. As well as traffic information, LED signs could be used to provide car parking guidance, speed monitoring and event information etc. to give real time information to drivers.
 - Development of the Roadworks.org portal to increase the amount of local information available. Members were given a demonstration of the portal.

Additional information was then provided in response to questions and comments from Members:

- *What is the difference between SCOOT and MOVA?*
Both were both intelligent signalling systems. The difference was that SCOOT co-ordinated signals across a network of linked junctions whereas MOVA controlled signals at a single junction. The signals constantly adjusted to traffic flow. Car breakdowns could confuse the system which was where the remote CCTV management system could be used to monitor a situation remotely and react to issues on the network. The CCTV was not monitored full time but officers could make periodic checks or when issues were reported.
- An issue raised about a narrow section of road from Bennetts Bank to Ketley Brook would be considered as part of the improvements to Ketley Brook roundabout but depended on available widths. Traffic flows around Ketley Brook were predicted to increase significantly over the next 2 years and the alterations would add capacity for future growth. Over the longer term, consideration would be given to dualling some of the approaches.
- An issue raised on the Hadley- Donnington route at Trench Lock where two lanes reduce to one would be taken back by officers to look at.
- *When do you install signals at pedestrian crossings and how do you encourage pedestrians to use crossings and wait for the green light to ensure their safety?*
Roundabouts could be difficult to cross and that was why pedestrians benefitted from signalling. Crossings need to be set back from the roundabout to prevent the back up of traffic which meant they were not always on the 'desire line' for pedestrians and a key issue was getting people to use the crossings. Railings had been tried but had not worked because pedestrians skirted around outside of

the rails. More work needed to be done to model improvements and the best way to cater for pedestrian flow.

- *When a pedestrian presses the button at a crossing where does the signal go?*
This depended on the type of system. Fixed time systems would not respond although the system may register a pedestrian was waiting. Demand responsive systems would programme a pedestrian crossing in for the soonest appropriate time.
- *How will the impact of the part-time signals at Randlay be monitored? The Chair had previously expressed concerns about the introduction of part-time signals even at Randlay but understood the exceptional circumstances at this roundabout due to the lack of pedestrian movement.*
The signals would improve traffic flow at peak times particularly on the slip roads on and off the A442. The particular circumstances at Randlay were the build-up of queues at peak times and the fact that the roundabout did not have pedestrian movement which meant it was the only roundabout assessed as suitable for part-time lights. The lights would be introduced on a trial basis. Journey time surveys would be carried out, accidents and the impact on the wider network would be monitored to assess whether part-time lights were right or if an adjustment to more full time operation was required. The Cabinet Member emphasised that this was not a 'pilot' and that there was no intention to make lights at other roundabouts part-time for safety reasons.
- *If MOVA and SCOOT are effective it may reduce pressure from the public to switch to part-time signals, especially at Ketley Brook.*
It should be possible to see the impact of the technology at Ketley Brook by March 2017. The upgrade of the UTC would also give more scope for proactive and reactive control by taking data feeds from the network and acting on the data.
- *Will the system at Hollinswood improve access to Stafford Park and the Station?*
MOVA had been installed at Hollinswood and had already improved traffic flow as reported. There was finite capacity at Hollinswood and the options of dualling on Rampart Way and improving the entrance / exit to the Station were being considered to help balance flow.
- *Have you considered using cameras to deter drivers from jumping red lights, for example at Trench Lock where it seems to be a problem?*
This would be discussed with the Safer Roads Partnership of West Mercia Police.
- *There were several questions about the delays to works at Limekiln Bank and whether the Council could have done more to co-ordinate with the utility companies to minimise delays.*
The Assistant Director and Manager assured Members that the Council had done everything possible to put pressure on utility companies to keep the project on track. The Council had completed most of the work but the project had been held up by the utility company's failure to divert apparatus and instruct their sub-contractors to complete the work. Utility companies were required to 'co-operate within resources' but the Council had no legal powers over utility companies to

enforce action. The Council had held discussions to put pressure on the utility company and had issued formal letters of complaint to Severn Trent but there had been no movement. The Cabinet Member said this was frustrating because the delays impacted on local people and on the Council.

From 1 June, a requirement had been introduced for utility companies to apply for a street works permit to carry out works. The Council could add conditions to the permit and would have more control over when work was carried out, for example a permit for works in Arleston been granted on condition that the work was carried out during the school holiday and completed by 5 September. If the company failed to comply they could be issued with fines or fixed penalty notices. The future improvements to the Limekiln Bank roundabout funded by the LEP would be carried out under such a permit issued by the Council.

- *A Member asked officers for views on press reports about a call for T-junctions to be replaced by mini-roundabouts.*
If it was being suggested that existing T-junctions should be replaced with mini-roundabouts it would require a multi-million pound investment by government.
- *Have there been any further representations from Telford MPs on this matter?*
The calls from some members of the public and Lucy Allan MP last year had led to the Cabinet Member asking the scrutiny committee as an independent cross-party group to review the issue. The Committee had concluded that the Council should not remove or switch existing signals to part-time operation for safety reasons and the Committee's response had been communicated to Lucy Allan. The Cabinet Member added that since then she had not received further representations on the matter.
- A member remarked that he did a lot of travelling and compared to other parts of the country the roads in Telford were comparatively uncongested.
- In response to a question, officers confirmed that the Roadworks.org portal would be linked to My Telford.

There were no further questions and the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers who left the meeting.

CCPSC-06 Scrutiny Co-optees

The Chair updated Members on the recruitment of co-optees. Two candidates had been interviewed and offered positions: Paula Doherty from Edmond Parish Council and Dave Johnson who had previously been co-opted to the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – that the appointment of co-optees Paula Doherty and Dave Johnson be endorsed.

CCPSC-07 Work Programme

The Chair introduced the item which was for the Committee to consider items for the 2016/17 work programme. A copy of the work plan was tabled for discussion which showed items previously agreed by the Committee, items not scrutinised during the last work programme and new suggestions. The Scrutiny Management Board would meet on 20 July to determine the priorities for scrutiny and the Chair asked members for any other suggestions or to identify any items they would like the Scrutiny Management Board to consider in its determination. The following points were made:

- A number of members expressed an interest in looking at the Definitive Map for Rights of Way
- Cllr Reynolds updated the Committee on a letter received by the Leader from the West Mercia Chief Constable about the intention to consult on new policing leadership arrangements and the potential merger of the Superintendent post with Shropshire. Cllr Reynolds had asked for an item to be put on the Police & Crime Panel agenda for 6 July to question the Police & Crime Commissioner on the plans and he suggested that, linked to this, the Committee should include an item in the work programme on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

The Chair invited Members to consider the work plan and to email any other suggestions or priorities to the Scrutiny Officer after the meeting to be taken to the Scrutiny Management Board.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm

Chairman:

Date: