SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Narborough

WEDNESDAY, 10 APRIL 2024

Present:-

Cllr. Nick Brown (Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)

Cllr. Nick Chapman	Cllr. Antony Moseley	Cllr. Matt Tomeo
Cllr. Luke Cousin	Cllr. Ande Savage	
Cllr. Janet Forey	Cllr. Tracey Shepherd	

Officers present:-

Lisa Boland	-	ICT & Transformation Group Manager
Tiffany Back	-	Transformation and Projects Service Manager
Katie Brooman	-	Elections and Governance Manager
Nicole Cramp	-	Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer
Isaac Thomas	-	Democracy Support Officer

Also in attendance:-

Cllr. Ben Taylor (Planning Delivery and Enforcement & Corporate Transformation Portfolio Holder)

Apologies:-

Cllr. Roy Denney, Cllr. Susan Findlay and Cllr. Neil Wright

274. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

No disclosures were received.

275. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024, as circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

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276. **CABINET EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS: ADMINISTRATIONS 2024-25 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS**

Considered – report of the Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer.

Cabinet Executive's response was noted.

With regards to Recommendation 9, Cllr. Luke Cousin requested that a cost-benefit breakdown of increasing HVO storage be provided. It was agreed that a more detailed answer would be provided by the Neighbourhood Services Group Manager.

DECISION
That Cabinet Executive's response to Scrutiny Commission be considered.
Reason:
As set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, it is the duty of the Executive to respond to Scrutiny reports and recommendations.

277. UPDATE ON TRANSFORMATION

Considered – Presentation from the ICT & Transformation Group Manager and the Transformation & Projects Service Manager.

The ICT & Transformation Group Manager and the Transformation & Projects Service Manager provided an update on Transformation, covering the background to Transformation, the journey so far and future ambitions. Members were invited to ask questions throughout the presentation.

Question 1:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager updated Members on the Transformation Survey which was distributed to all BDC staff members, including staff at the depot.

Cllr. Matt Tomeo queried, from a diversity and inclusion perspective, whether the survey received responses from all levels of staff, e.g., including staff on lower salary ranges and part-time staff?

Response:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager responded that the survey was anonymised and therefore did not capture any employment information other than the respondent's group and service area.

Question 2:

Cllr. Luke Cousin asked whether any examples could be given of adverse or negative impacts of Transformation so far and, if so, how challenges were monitored and overcome.

Response:

The ICT & Transformation Group Manager explained that, in the early stages of the Transformation journey, it was important not to disengage staff. Therefore, initial Transformation projects focussed on areas where targets were easier to achieve, where improvements could be shown, and where there was more engagement from staff. Now, a year into the Transformation process, greater challenges would be expected and these would be tackled through the same project management process that guided earlier projects. The ICT & Transformation Group Manager expressed confidence in the team's ability to deal with upcoming challenges as staff members are now more confident in the process and many have engaged with the project management training that is available to all staff members.

Question 3:

Cllr. Matt Tomeo asked which projects the Transformation team expects will be the most challenging over the next year?

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Response:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager responded that greater challenges are expected where BDC is working with partnerships or delivering services on behalf of other authorities, as the Transformation team will have less control of the process.

Question 4:

Cllr. Antony Moseley asked how taxi licensing processing timescales were reduced and queried whether this has led to a reduction of quality?

Response:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager responded that an emphasis was placed on maintaining the quality of the licensing service while reducing the timescales. Specifically, the team were able to reduce the amount of times an individual needs to visit the Council Offices to obtain their taxi license, by re-hashing the process into a logical order where multiple processes could be completed during one visit.

Question 5:

Referring to the reduced timescales in planning application initial evaluations, Cllr. Antony Moseley asked whether application numbers remained consistent during this time period, or whether the reduced timescales were partly due to less planning applications being received?

Response:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager responded that the number of planning applications received has stayed consistent during the period in question.

Question 6:

Cllr. Antony Moseley asked whether much resistance has been received by teams at Blaby?

Response:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager explained that some staff members were initially sceptical of the Transformation process but one way to overcome this has been to ask staff members to step into the shoes of the customer and experience the customer journey from their perspective. This has helped staff to realise that it is within their control to change processes, e.g., reducing the number of phone calls or visits that a resident has to make.

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Question 7:

Cllr. Nick Chapman asked whether the reduced timescales for Planning Applications and taxi licensing will mean that less staff are needed to complete these tasks. Therefore, could savings be generated through staff reductions in this way?

Response:

The Transformation & Projects Service Manager explained that the reduced timescales show that teams are now responding to applications more quickly and providing a better service to those applying. These process efficiencies mean we can do things much more cheaply and will bring benefits. The ICT & Transformation Group Manager added that BDC staff are generally full to capacity with work and increased efficiencies release the capacity for teams to focus on things that they were unable to focus on previously. Additionally, increased efficiency has enabled vacancy posts to be removed, allowing £100,000 of savings through establishment reductions.

Question 8:

With regards to the slide on Transformation's 2024 Focus, Cllr. Nick Brown asked how the list of priorities was decided and queried whether any areas of focus had not made this list due to a lack of capacity?

Response:

The Transformation & Projects Group Manager responded that Mobile Working and ICT Stabilisation were identified as priorities as they are both cross-cutting projects with wide-reaching impacts across the organisation.

Question 9:

Cllr. Nick Brown asked the Planning Delivery and Enforcement & Corporate Transformation Portfolio Holder, Cllr. Ben Taylor, which areas we wishes to see priority and focus going forward?

Response:

Cllr. Ben Taylor responded that customer needs and digital inclusion would be high priorities going forward as part of the Council's digital agenda. Cllr. Taylor commended officers for their delivery so far.

Question 10:

Cllr. Luke Cousin asked whether Transformation projects would be added to iPlan as measurable targets for Members to monitor throughout the year.

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Response:

The Transformation & Projects Group Manager responded that all projects are measurable on iPlan, with most impacts being shown through service performance measures. The Transformation & Projects Group Manager explained that further work would be done to incorporate Transformation into measures for services.

The Scrutiny Chairman, Cllr. Nick Brown requested that the Transformation team return to Scrutiny in 12 months' time with an update on their achievements and obstacles faced.

278.   SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democracy Support Officer updated Members on several upcoming Scrutiny groups and informed Members that they would receive invitations to the following:

- Contaminated Land Task & Finish Group
- Net Zero by 2050 Working Group
- iPlan Working Group
- The Council's approach to Graffiti & Littering Task & Finish Group
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Task & Finish Group
- HR Review Task & Finish Group

Members accepted the items on the Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24 and no additional actions were proposed.

279.   CONSIDERATION OF FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

No items were raised for further information or examination.

280.   FURTHER ACTIONS FOR SCRUTINY ARISING FROM MEETING

There were no further actions arising from the meeting.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.33 P.M.