

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES** held at County Hall, Matlock on 19 July 2018.

PRESENT

Councillor T A Kemp (in the Chair)

Councillors B Bingham, J Boulton, C Dale (substitute member), G Hickton (substitute member) Mrs J Twigg, M Wall and G Wharmby

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Moesby, A Stevenson and Ms A Western,

Also in attendance - Councillor C Hart.

13/18 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Resources held on 31 May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14/18 **FINANCIAL TIMETABLE** Peter Handford, Director of Finance and ICT attended the meeting and gave an update on the Financial Timetable which had previously been circulated to members. The document explained the tasks that finance were undertaking at various times of the year and how this gave assurance to the organisation that it's position was secure.

There had been some criticisms made of the approach to Scrutiny in other organisations which had suffered some element of governance failure, and the Director of Finance and ICT offered members some assurances about how the Council, from a finance perspective, protected itself from such potential failings and how he saw the Scrutiny function assisting in this.

Members were referred to the financial timetable and the following dates were highlighted, with a summary being given of their importance:-

January 2018 - Approval of accounting Policies
Revision of Five Year Financial Plan (FYFP)

March 2018 - External Audit commence Interim Audit works

April 2018 - Departmental sign off packs with Budget Monitoring regularly throughout the year

June/
July 2018 - External audit of accounts with findings/
recommendations outlined in the ISA260 which is presented to Audit Committee and then to Council

A lot of this work linked in with the work of the Audit Committee whose terms of reference had been circulated to members.

Audit Committee was delegated by Full Council to perform certain functions which included a role not unlike that performed by Scrutiny.

Audit Committee had a responsibility around value for money and financial standing to ensure that measures were in place to allow the Council to best achieve on these two key tasks.

Scrutiny had a role around ensuring that Council services were achieving Value for Money as part of their service reviews and ensuring progress towards savings.

At the next meeting of the committee, members would be asked to look at the assumptions around the FYFP, with the key control being to make sure forward plans were reasonable and likely to be achievable with savings required.

Members were given the opportunity to make comments and observations and ask questions, which were duly noted or answered by the Director of Finance and ICT.

The Chairman thanked Peter for a most interesting and informative update and that the Financial Timetable would become a regular item on the Agenda.

RESOLVED to note the update.

15/18 DISCUSSION WITH THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES

Janie Berry, Director of Legal Services attended the meeting and gave members an overview of the duties and responsibilities of her role.

As the Council's Chief Legal Officer, she was responsible for the strategic delivery of: – Legal Services; Democratic Services; Member and Strategic Director Support; Business Centre; Registration Services and the Coroner's Service

Members were informed that there were a number of statutory roles undertaken by the Director of Legal Services:-

Monitoring Officer

- Established by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and works alongside the Council's Head of Paid Service and the s151 Officer;

- Ensured the Council did not act unlawfully and that decision making did not give rise to maladministration and was the custodian of the Council's Constitution;
- Promoted strong ethical conduct via the Council's Code of Conduct; and
- Could not be the Council's Head of Paid Service or the s151 Officer.

Proper Officer for Registration Services

- Strategic delivery of all registration activities, births, marriages and deaths across the County (excluding Derby City);
- Maintained positive relationships with the Registrar General and General Register Officer;
- Supported the role of the County Superintendent Registrar to ensure that prescribed national performance targets are met;
- Successful GRO inspection outcomes; and
- Promote the County as a venue of choice for ceremonies and ensure that all members of the public using this Service had the best possible experience at often the most traumatic times of life.

County Returning Officer

- Prescribed by the Representation of the People Act 1983
- Responsible for the robust delivery of County Elections every four years with a strong focus on integrity
- Work closely with all District Councils and the Derbyshire Constabulary
- Develop and promote a local, regional and national presence with the Electoral Commission, Association of Electoral Commission and Solace
- Build on Derbyshire's existing robust attitude towards election integrity planning and zero tolerance approach to concern.

In terms of her work programme moving forward, Janie highlighted the following key themes:-

- Modernisation of all aspects of the Division;
- Act upon the recommendation of Standards Committee to undertake a review of the Council's ethical governance framework and the Constitution;
- Support the Council in its ambitions to be an Enterprising Council;
- Develop strong County wide links with peers and Stakeholders; and
- Overarching commitment to ensure the Council acts with transparency, integrity and fairness in its decision making

The Chairman thanked Janie for a most interesting and informative insight into her role.

RESOLVED to note the presentation

16/18 REGISTRATION SERVICE The Director of Legal Services, as Proper Officer for the Registration Service introduced Sandy McManus, County Superintendent Registrar who provided Members with a brief overview of the service and the vision moving forward.

Civil Registration began in 1837 and was governed by the General Register Office located in Southport - its main purpose being to create, maintain and securely store, accurate and timely records of all births, deaths, still-births, marriages and civil partnerships, which occur England and Wales.

In addition to the Proper Officer and the Registration Manager Derbyshire Registration Service, consisted of just 70 staff, 12 of whom were FT, 11 were PT & the remaining 47 were relief staff who predominantly assisted in delivering the highly seasonal marriage programme.

The Register Office was based in Chesterfield but in order to ensure the service was accessible to all Derbyshire residents, there were a further 10 Registration Offices conveniently located in various Derbyshire towns, namely Ashbourne, Bakewell, Buxton, Glossop, Ilkeston, Long Eaton, Matlock, New Mills, Ripley & Swadlincote.

However, whilst there were numerous offices, few of them were of an ideal standard and were in need of improvements such as new furnishings and décor which was something being worked towards but one office which would soon be vastly improved was the Chesterfield Register Office which was relocating from New Beetwell Street in Chesterfield, up to the impressive building that was, Chesterfield Town Hall. The aim and purpose of the move was to provide vastly improved and more accessible facilities for service users and staff.

The new accommodation offered a highly impressive and attractive building; newly refurbished Register Office accommodation planned by the service to offer a layout to suit specific needs with clean, fresh décor in addition to :-

1. Greater accessibility for everyone to all areas, because all of the offices were on one level (as opposed to being across 3 floors)
2. Separate waiting areas for birth and death registration appointments

3. A choice of 3 attractive Ceremony Rooms (to suit varying numbers of guests) with the benefit of comfortable and spacious waiting areas
4. Increased and more flexible office space
5. A huge and more secure Strong Room enabling the storage of all of the Counties registers which would create a more streamlined service for certificate production
6. Much improved accommodation for both the public to visit and for the staff to work in.

The building would also provide much improved photo opportunities for ceremonies by way of the Town Hall entrance and steps outside/ staircase inside / balcony and gardens.

Additionally a further choice of ceremony rooms was likely to be offered in CBC's accommodation including their event space and committee rooms.

In the course of the Registration Service' interesting, varied and often highly sensitive work we provide:

Appointments to Register Births, Deaths, still births, Re-registration, declarations & attest & Notices of intention to marry, Manage RG's licences & produce replacement Certificates.

Various statutory Ceremonies were offered such as Wedding, Civil partnerships, & both private and group Citizenship ceremonies and in non-statutory naming, renewal of vows and commitment ceremonies

Between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018 Derbyshire Registration Service staff registered 2996 births; 5974 deaths; and 2924 weddings

For the same period and year April 17 to March 18, customer questionnaires completed by service users demonstrated that 98% of people who had used the service (and completed a survey) were satisfied with the overall service they received. However, criticisms received on the feedback forms related to the poor, and unwelcoming and tired accommodation at some register offices.

So whilst acknowledgements were received for the excellent service provided there was no complacency, and the service was striving to develop, improve and modernise its approach and all opportunities needed to be explored.

As a service, the majority of income is generated from weddings and the service were very fortunate to be able to offer 122 fabulous approved premise venues which could all host all the types of ceremonies which were offered. Derbyshire really did have venues to suit everyone and

everyone's budget amongst the County's vast array of hotels; splendid stately homes and Halls; farm venues; a dome; a football club; barn venues; a railway centre; golf clubs; a forestry centre; a castle; and in addition to County Hall being a venue, numerous pleasant rooms within the authorities own Registration offices, which all offered more cost effective ceremonies. Images of some of these venues were provided for members at the meeting.

However, whilst there was a huge variety of venues available in the County, little had been done to ever promote them but it was believed that bespoke web pages, where venues and other advertisers could pay for prime advertising space, would be a worthwhile investment to further boost the income generating side of the Service.

Derbyshire truly was one of the most beautiful counties and it provided the perfect backdrop for any wedding or even film set – it had so much to offer from its rugged hills and mountains, windswept moors, rolling farmland, wooded dales, lakeland views, caverns, bustling market towns, quaint picturesque villages and the service should be proud to promote it as the perfect setting for ceremonies in conjunction with promoting tourism.

Sandy explained that having conducted many ceremonies in Derbyshire, couples often said how they first visited the Peak District simply for a holiday but on realising just how beautiful it was and seeing what the County had to offer, they chose, not only to return to Derbyshire, but to actually return and celebrate the most important day of their lives with their friends and families.

Unfortunately, the way the Derbyshire website had recently been relaunched, it now appeared to be rather difficult to locate the Registration Service pages which was seen as very poor considering the life changing circumstances which some of the service users were experiencing at a time when they don't choose to but need, to make contact

The Proper Officer explained to members that she and colleagues in the Registration Service felt that It was really essential that the Service had a prominent presence on the DCC site due to the nature of the work but actually perhaps preferable to that would be a link to its own web pages which apart from providing essential information for service users, could also be used to provide the opportunity to create additional income with advertising revenue.

In addition to the venues paying for various advertising packages (to suit their budget, the best being a link to their own website), it was anticipated that advertising could be sold to stakeholders such as bridal shops / wedding car hire companies / florists / event dressers / balloon

companies / wedding dress shops etc., and other relevant advertisers may wish to advertise specifically on the birth or death registration related pages.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Communities attended the meeting, as portfolio holder for the Registration Service and gave her full support to the development of the website and the introduction of advertising packages.

Members of the committee also gave their support and felt that it was very important to link this in with the tourism and culture offer within the County.

RESOLVED (1) to note the presentation on the Derbyshire Registration Service; and

(2) to agree that the Proper Officer and Registration Service staff look to actively develop the Registration Service website and explore the introduction of advertising /marketing packages.

17/18 REVIEW OF INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE STAFF WELLBEING AND GOOD MENTAL HEALTH Members were informed of a proposal to review the Council's policies and procedures to promote staff wellbeing and good mental health.

A recently published report "Thriving at work" (2017) was commissioned by the government. This independent review considered how employers can better support the mental health of all people currently in employment including those with mental health problems or poor wellbeing to remain in, and thrive through work.

The overriding message of the "Thriving at work report" was that employers should provide support for all employees to thrive, and more targeted and tailored support for those who may need it. The report identified areas of good practice and used this evidence to formulate a number of mental health core standards that could be adopted across all workplaces at relatively little cost. Examples of the core standards include implementing a mental health at work plan that encouraged and promoted good mental health of all staff and an open organisational culture, developing mental health awareness among employees and encouraging open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling.

The proposed scrutiny review would consider what the Council was currently doing to promote staff wellbeing and good mental health, and would consider the effectiveness of this approach. It would also explore opportunities to better support staff, especially those with mental ill health or poor wellbeing, to remain in and thrive at work.

During the review evidence would be gathered about:

- The nature and effectiveness of the Council's current initiatives to promote staff wellbeing and good mental health.
- The Council's current policies, strategies and initiatives available for staff who need more targeted support. How this support is publicised and accessed, and the experiences of staff receiving this support.
- The thoughts and experiences of staff who have experienced mental health problems (whilst employed by the Council) who have not received or have not tried to access support provided by the Council.
- The level of staff awareness and understanding of mental health issues, especially the awareness of staff in supervisory or managerial roles.
- The data available to quantify and monitor the prevalence of staff experiencing mental health problems and the potential benefits (if any) of improving the monitoring of employee mental health and wellbeing.
- Current best practice to promote and support wellbeing and good mental health in the workplace.

During the course of the review evidence would be gathered from numerous sources, including relevant officers from Occupational Health, Public Health and Human Resources and the Cabinet Member for Council Services. The views of staff will also be sought.

A working group would be appointed by this Committee to undertake the review. The working group will submit progress reports and a final report to the full Committee at the conclusion of the review. It is anticipated that the review would be completed in 6 months.

RESOLVED (1) to note the scope of the review of initiatives to promote staff wellbeing and good mental health; and

(2) that Councillors B Bingham, J Boulton, T Kemp, A Stevenson, J Twigg and M Wall be appointed to serve on the working group

18/18 **WORK PROGRAMME** The following items were proposed for the next meetings:-

20 September 2018

- Discussion with Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture and Tourism
- Derbyshire Developments Limited

6 December 2018

- One Public Estate