

Time Commenced – 6:00pm
Time Finished – 7.06pm

Corporate Services and Cost of Living Scrutiny Review Board

20 July 2023

Present: Councillor Pattison (Chair)
Councillors Kaur, Pandey, Repton and Wilson

In attendance – Heather Greenan - Director of Corporate Management
Jane Godfrey – Acting Head of Policy and Insight
Andy Brammall – Director of Digital and Customer Services
Lee Haynes – Head of Information, Transformation and
Business Applications

01/23 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Atwal.

02/23 Late Items

There were no late items

03/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

04/23 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

05/23 Insight Led Council

The Board received a presentation which gave an overview of policy and insight. The presentation included general sources of insight for Councillors, becoming an insight led Council, Insight led Council approach, soft launch, feedback, benefits, the impact of better data in local government and next steps.

A Member of the Board asked if data collection was cost effective and if other Councils were using insight to assist decision making. Various examples were given of where the information had proved useful and that often there was an expectation from the Government that data would be integrated. Each Council approached this in slightly different ways depending upon resources available and the cost would depend on the size of the authority. It was reported that the DLUHC had been impressed with information provided recently. We were a bit of a trail blazer in this area of work.

The information was stored on our own servers so we would have complete ownership. Other authorities may have used external organisations to support them and this would affect the costs.

A Member of the Board asked if there were any limits or downsides to the data and how it was protected from leaks and abuses. Links with the police and health authorities could be a challenge as they may not want to share their information.

It was reported that it was difficult to move at pace and the expectations needed to be managed. Data sharing and processing needed to be lawful. On security it was reported that data systems sat on the council's infrastructure and were therefore protected by the council's cyber security systems and were built in accordance with data protection laws. Role based permissions were also applied.

External data was always a challenge but this was being addressed in the near future.

The Chair asked if shared data moved from our servers to the servers of the other organisations. It was reported that information sharing arrangements were put in place and therefore protection was put in place at that time.

A Member of the Board asked how confident we were with the data quality and if there was any potential for bias in the data.

It was reported that data quality was as good as the source system. Records were matched rather than merged so that information could be displayed on one page as records were kept in different formats across different systems. There were gaps in data and there was a focus on data quality.

On bias, assumptions could not be made by seeing the activities of households but the information could be used to open discussions with services. Culture was key, the Council was on a journey, workshops had been undertaken with services to see how data was being used. The council always tried to promote focus on good quality insight to help and inform decision making. There was a wealth of insight across the Council.

A Member of the Board would be interested to see the checks and balances to make sure data was not used in the wrong way.

Resolved to note the presentation.

06/23 Digital by Default and Artificial Intelligence

The Board received a report and presentation which provided an overview of digital by default and AI services. The presentation included digital by default and the digital citizen programme, game changing capabilities, transaction channel costs, which front door for which citizen, AI – a new service reality, AI – digital talker, current webchat and phone performance, AI opportunities innovation roadmap and next steps / options.

A Member of the Board asked what the feedback had been on the digital talker. It was reported that the feedback had been mixed but that was expected at this early stage. The system was evolving and improving day by day. If people could not get the answers they needed there was always the option of speaking to a human.

A Member of the Board asked about translation services. It was reported that this was an area of development, people could type in a particular language and the answer would be given in the that language. Translation on phone services needed more development but was moving in a positive direction.

A Member of the Board referred to feedback and asked if the data was being recorded and monitored. It was reported that data was collected and anonymised and the information was used to see what was working well and what needed to be tweaked to make it better. It would be a continuous journey to continually improve it.

A Member of the Board asked about what testing had been undertaken prior to the soft launch. It was reported that teams had been testing the system on a daily basis to make sure that it was as good as it could be before it was launched. Lots of improvements were made before the system went live. There had been a focus on residents who worked for the Council to help with the testing. The system was continually learning and was constantly being reviewed and improved.

A Member of the Board was concerned that a lot of the population struggled with technology and asked for those people how could they get in touch and get their queries resolved. It was reported that there was always a fallback position for those who could not or would not use AI, there was always the option of speaking to a human. Staffing would be reviewed according to demand.

Resolved to note the presentation.

07/23 Remit, Work Programme and Topic Reviews

The Corporate Services and Cost of Living Board reviewed its Terms of Reference and Remit. The Board meets up to four times in the municipal year. The Board may undertake Topic Review/s supported by Democratic Services Officers and officers from other departments, but would also look at service reviews, policy development and any issues referred from the Executive Scrutiny Board.

The report allowed officers to inform the Board of any key work areas, issues or potential topic review subjects for discussion or inclusion in the work programme.

Members of the Board also reviewed items for the Corporate Services and Cost of Living Board work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year and any topic reviews.

Resolved

1. To note the report and approve the work programme set out in appendix 1 of the report subject to the Councillor Casework Portal being added to the work programme for the March 2023 meeting of the Board.
2. For members of the Board to send any further ideas for items or topic reviews to the Chair.

MINUTES END