

Time commenced – 18:00  
Time finished – 19:37

## **Corporate Services Scrutiny Review Board**

3 October 2019

Present: Councillor Naitta(Chair)  
Councillors Pattison (Vice Chair), A Pegg,  
G Nawaz

In Attendance: Zoe Bird – Human Resources Shared Services Manager  
Bernard Fenton - Head of Customer Service  
Catherine Williams - Head of Regeneration and Major Projects

### **09/19 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Paul Simpson and Councillors Dhindsa, Froggatt and Willoughby.

### **10/19 Late items introduced by the Chair**

There were none.

### **11/19 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **12/19 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

### **13/19 Customer Services/ Universal Credit**

Councillors considered a report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources. The report was presented by the Head of Customer Service and provided an update on the Council's work on Universal Credit and the Welfare Reform Service.

It was reported that the Universal Credit Full Service had been implemented in Derby since 11 July 2018 and that this service was fully managed by the Department of Work and Pensions. It was noted by Councillors that statistics on Universal Credit were currently only available at a three county level and that statistics on Derby specifically could not be provided.

Councillors also noted that the Universal Credit scheme had highlighted underlying money management challenges for applicants and that some claimants had a lack of digital skills and confidence. It was reported that Universal

Credit claimants were required to maintain an online journal and that claimants could request an advance payment and defer paying this back for up to three months.

It was noted by Councillors that Derby City Council had a unique case management service that identified individuals with expenditure higher than their income. It was reported that the Council provided personalised support plans managed by experienced case workers, for customers in financial crisis. It was noted that these support plans combined short term financial support with access to services.

It was noted by Councillors that the Council was assisting customers in applying for utility top ups and food vouchers, along with Debt relief Orders and debt rescheduling. It was also noted that homelessness numbers had been circulated to the chair. It was reported that claimants were being assisted with housing, homelessness, health & wellbeing, social care, employment support, counselling, training courses and clothing.

It was reported that the Money Work Me service was also being provided to Universal Credit applicants at the point at which they applied. Councillors noted that this service provided applicants with a common sense approach to budget management, by sign posting to other services and providing practical advice such as action plans.

It was noted by Councillors that since 1 April 2019, the Welfare Reform Service had managed 164 cases. It was reported that sixty five of these were now closed cases, forty five were currently open, in thirty nine cases the applicant had failed to attend and in fifteen cases the applicant had disengaged before completing.

It was also reported that 239 applications had been made for external funds and that this had generated £61,008 in external funds for claimants. Councillors noted that in 86 cases, the Welfare Reform Service had ensured the correct benefits were issued to claimants and that there had been 23 Home Start cases at a cost to the Council of £4,105.

It was noted by Councillors that since 19 August 2019, the Money Work Me service had received 43 referrals from the Department of Work and Pensions, 25 of which were allocated appointments. Of these 25 it was reported that 4 had been referred to an experienced case worker, 12 were uncontactable, 4 had refused the service and 2 referrals had been returned to the Department of Work and Pensions.

Councillors noted the details of a case study based on a family from the Republic of Ireland that had been assisted by the Council. It was reported that this family had faced significant financial issues since moving to the United Kingdom, but after engaging with the Council's Welfare Reform Service the family now had a stable housing arrangement; were being assisted with debt reduction and had successfully accessed several trust funds.

Councillors questioned how Derby City Council's Welfare Reform Service

compared with similar services at other councils. Councillors were informed that unlike other councils, Derby City Council employed professional caseworkers and that this made the Council's service personal and unique.

Councillors asked what the standard timescale was for a case and were informed that this figure was dependant upon the complexity of a case and the level of engagement from the customer. It was noted by Councillors that some cases could take up to six months.

A Councillor asked why Derby City Charity had not been contacted by the Welfare Reform Service. It was noted by Councillors that this would be looked into. Councillors questioned whether Universal Credit was failing or succeeding in Derby. It was reported that Universal Credit in Derby had been positive in some instances and had been negative in others.

Councillors asked whether an explanation could be provided, as to why some customers had failed to attend their appointment with the Welfare Reform Service. Councillors noted that some customers actively chose not to attend their appointment and that some customers failed to attend due to issues in their personal lives.

A Councillor questioned whether there were other vulnerable people in Derby that the Welfare Reform Service were not aware of and was informed that these individuals did exist. Councillors asked whether the number of individuals being supported by the Welfare Reform Service was expected to grow and were informed that the number of individuals the service was able to assist was dependant upon an increase in funding.

Councillors asked where external funding for customers came from. Councillors noted that the majority of external funding was from trust funds and that in order to access this funding, applicants often had to meet a set of criteria.

A Councillor asked whether the large number of different languages spoken in Derby had been a challenge for the Welfare Reform Service. Councillors noted that the Council did not turn applicants away due to language barriers and that the Council provided translation services to applicants who were unable to bring friends or family who could translate for them.

**Resolved:**

**To note the information contained in the report regarding Customer Services and Universal Credit.**

## **14/19 Markets – City Centre regeneration Plan – Update on Markets**

Councillors considered a report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources. The report was presented by the Head of Regeneration and Major Projects and provided an update on the Council's City Centre Regeneration Plan and Allenton Market proposals.

It was reported that there had been a national decline in traditional markets, with an average occupancy rate of 75% in the United Kingdom and that this had been a long term trend. Councillors noted that the Derby City Council Markets team had been restructured and now consisted of eight members of staff.

Councillors noted that Allenton Market had operated at a loss since 2012/13 and that this market consistently had an occupancy rate of under 50%, which was well below the national average. It was reported that at the July 2019 Cabinet meeting, it had been agreed that continued operation of Allenton Market by the Council was not viable. It was noted by Councillors that a consultation on the future of Allenton Market had been held with the public and that 88 responses had been received. It was also noted that the Council had not received any bids to run the market and that if no viable bids were received by 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the market would close after a consolation period with traders.

It was reported that the Market Hall had an occupancy rate of 57% in 2019 which was also below the national average. Councillors noted that the Council was exploring a plan to transform the Market Hall into a new, more commercially viable model. It was reported that the transformed Market Hall would include an anchor tenant and a flexible event space. Councillors noted that contracts were already in place for improvements to the roof and to the outside of the Market Hall. It was also reported that plans for the interior transformation of the Market Hall were going to be put to Cabinet in December 2019.

Councillors asked whether current traders would be moved during works on the Market Hall. It was noted that most current traders wished to remain in the Market Hall during renovations and that these traders were aware that they would be required to move during some stages of the proposed works. A Councillor asked whether special needs classes which took place in the Market Hall building would continue to take place there after the transformation project was complete. It was reported that this had not been discussed, but that there was no obvious reason why these lessons couldn't continue.

Councillors stated that they were pleased with the proposed design for the retransformed Market Place and that they felt it was important for this work to take place soon. Councillors asked what the deficit was for running the city's markets. It was noted by Councillors that the deficit for markets was currently in the region of £40,000 per year.

Councillors asked whether the Council would provide support/ training to any party that submitted a successful bid for the running of Allenton Market. It was noted by Councillors that the Council had shared information with potential bidders on how the Council had ran Allenton Market. It was also noted that organisation such as The National Association of British Markets would also be able to provide advice to any successful bidder.

Councillors asked whether traders on Osnabruck Square would have to move after works on the Market Hall were completed. It was noted by Councillors that these traders were keen to move inside the Market Hall once works were finished,

subject to tenancy agreements. A Councillor stated that it was important for the anchor tenant in the transformed Market Hall to appeal to the public. It was agreed that this was essential and that the anchor tenant needed to appeal to a wide mix of the public.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the information contained in the report regarding Markets and the City Centre Regeneration Plan.**
- 2. That Cabinet should agree the proposed new space in the market place should be developed to encourage and attract more young people from all backgrounds and cultures to access the facilities and thus ensure the development of diversity and engagement from all age ranges and demographics in Derby and also ensure the sustainability of the market place for future generations.**
- 3. That Cabinet should consider including a Technology Hub within the new Market Place space to encourage tech entrepreneurs and startups in Derby**

## **15/19 Topic Review – Agency Workers – Trend of Spend/ Hours/ Usage**

Councillors considered a report of the Service Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development. The report was presented by the Human Resources Shared Services Manager and provided figures on agency use through the Matrix contract covering the period April 2019 to June 2019.

Councillors noted that in quarter 1 2019/2020 total spend on agency staff at the Council had risen, largely as a result of a national 2% pay rise that agency staff were entitled to. It was also noted by Councillors that the total hours worked by agency staff during this quarter had also risen and that this trend needed to be monitored.

It was noted by the board that despite pay increases, there had been a significant fall in total agency spend between quarter 1 2016/2017 and quarter 1 2019/2020. It was also noted that 94% of total agency spend covered staffing costs with £280,000-£300,000 a year being spent on Matrix and agency fees.

Councillors noted that the People's Services directorate accounted for the highest spend in quarter 1 2019/2020 at £591,325 followed by Communities and Place at £439,038. Councillors were informed that agency workers made up around 4-5% of the Council's workforce and that this figure was to be expected for an organisation of Derby City Councils size.

Councillors were updated on the pay arrangements for agency refuse collectors and were informed that these individuals received one hours pay on days where they were sent home due to there being no work available. Councillors noted that the Council had 15 agency workers that had been employed through an agency for over two years and that three of these were refuse workers..

A Councillor asked how the Council planned to lower agency usage. It was noted by Councillors that the Council aimed to lower agency usage by offering permanent contracts to agency workers in instances where this was a viable option.

Councillors asked when the Council's contract with Matrix was up for renewal. Councillors were informed that this contract was up for renewal in December 2019 and that the current contract was considered cost effective at £25,000 per year. Councillors commented that this contract seemed excellent value for money and gave their support for its renewal in December 2019.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the content of this report.**
- 2. To continue to monitor the appropriate use of agency staff, the length of agreements and to consider other alternatives whenever possible to ensure that a reduction is achieved.**
- 3. To note the increase over the previous quarter.**

## **16/19 Work Programme for 2019/20 Municipal Year**

A request for the Corporate Scrutiny Review Board to receive reports from a task group to consider gender representation arose from a motion to Council on 20.09.17. This motion requested a group be formed to look at the representation of females in elected roles. The motion was agreed and two meetings of the group took place. However, following recent discussions with the Chief Executive it was suggested that the remit of the group be extended to cover representation of gender as a whole across the Council. It was suggested that the task group report to the Corporate Scrutiny Review Board on a regular basis.

The remit of the group would be to look at the representation of gender as a whole across the Council with the intention of increasing the diversity of elected representatives and officers within the Council. This would enable a better representation of the diversity of the population of the City of Derby and would encourage more participation in the democratic process. A further aim would be to encourage creation of policies and procedures of the Council which better reflect the diversity of its officers and councillors.

**Resolution:**

**It was resolved that the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Board agree in principle to consider gender representation as part of the work programme for 2019/20, with the intention of a task group being formed (taking its membership from all 51 councillors) to report its findings to the Board.**

## 17/19 Items Referred from the Executive Scrutiny Board

There were none.

MINUTES END