

## **SELECT COMMITTEE**

16<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Present** –The Chairman (Councillor Staveley) and Councillors Brown, Mason, Moorby, Pighills, Shuttleworth, Thompson and Whitaker.

**Officers** – Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration, Economic Development Manager, Communications, Customer Services and Partnerships Manager and Committee Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Graham, Mercer, Solloway and Sutcliffe.

Start: 6.30pm

Finish: 9.35pm

Councillor Brown left the meeting at 7.59pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### **Minutes for Report**

OS.419

#### **CUSTOMER SERVICES - PERFORMANCE**

Further to Minute OS.402/17-18, the Communications, Customer Services and Partnerships Manager submitted a report presenting details of customer services performance in 2018, together with details of service improvement projects completed and planned improvements for 2019. A copy of the most recent customer services performance management report dated December 2018 had been circulated as an appendix to the Manager's; that report provided the following information

##### Customer Services Performance

- A chart giving three years call data for service demand comparison
- Performance compared to service level target
- Chart showing average queue time of incoming calls
- Chart showing average time waited before call is abandoned
- Chart showing average call handling time
- Volume of reception queries
- Analysis of reception queries

##### Breakdown Analysis of Customer Service Team Performance

- Resourcing of Customer Services including sickness data
- Summary of service specific issues
- Individual agent breakdown of calls answered
- Individual agent breakdown of call handling time

##### Analysis of Data Regarding

- Unique website visits with session data
- Telephony data for customer services
- Breakdown of face to face data by organisation
- E-mails : Customer Services mailbox
- Web form interactions showing forms completed online and mediated

The key performance indicator for call handling was 90% of calls answered each quarter. For the 2017/18 financial year the target had been met as an aggregate over the year with the team answering 91.47% of all calls received. In the current year the aggregate total to date was 91.26%, but as in both 2016/17 and 2017/18 the target had not been met in the first quarter (April to June). Use of social media had continued to help reduce call volumes on specific issues, for example disruption to bin collections due to bad weather. In recognition of the need for an alternative to

social media, consideration was to be given to the cost effectiveness of introducing bulk email / SMS messaging. A request by the Committee that consideration be given to inclusion of a message informing callers of their position in the queue had not been introduced as the varied nature of the calls received would have created difficulties in giving customers a reasonable indication as to when their call would be answered.

During the course of the ensuing discussion Members, amongst other comments and queries, asked

- a. That the ability of the telephony system to provide an auto call back facility be checked.
- b. That, whilst bearing in mind the need for elderly persons to have time to react, the scope to reduce the length of the automated options message be considered.

In drawing the discussion to a close the Chairman thanked the Communications, Customer Services and Partnerships Manager for her report and indicated that the Committee looked forward to receiving a further report in January 2020.

OS.420

### **VIBRANCY OF THE DISTRICT'S TOWN CENTRES AND VILLAGES**

The Chairman welcomed the Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration and the Economic Development Manager who had been invited to the meeting to deliver a presentation in respect of the vibrancy of the District's town centres and villages. In requesting the presentation when forming its work programme for the year the Committee had expressed a wish to understand the work being carried out on the vibrancy and sustainability of the District's towns and villages, and barriers to the delivery of projects associated there with.

The presentation covered the following

- Causes and decline on the high street and villages.
- Adoption of a settlement centric approach focused on Bentham, Cross Hills, Grassington, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Ingleton, Settle and Skipton.
- The strengths, opportunities, problems, projects and results for each of the above settlements, together with an assessment of progress and an indication of what else needed to be done.
- Vacancy rates of commercial premises and parking trends.
- Funding strategy.

The key issues highlighted could be summarised as follows

- Retail and leisure would continue to consolidate in regional centres.
- Tourism/leisure trends continued to evolve and competition would increase. Better services and attractions in the Lakes and South Pennines could potentially draw visitors away from Craven.
- There was a need to increase footfall and reasons for someone to spend.
- The success of towns and villages would increasingly rely on an interesting experience or theme.
- Rural towns and villages needed to be supported by a wider, more diverse economy.
- A mixture of interventions to deliver housing, leisure, transport, culture and economic development schemes would be required in all settlements

During the course of the discussion the Committee heard that in order of 23 projects had been costed and designed to be available if funding streams or investment became available, and that the Council's good track record could work to its advantage when making bids for funding. Capacity was an issue for the Team and limited the ability to develop, support community groups and implement projects, a key risk was the loss of experienced staff. The way forward and lessons derived from the work to date were identified within the presentation as follows:-

- The action plans for each settlement would / will vary according to their needs also the means of delivery will differ
- Projects always took longer than originally anticipated - small projects could take equally as long as larger projects,
- Projects and their delivery could be quite involved and presented a challenge for communities; professional assistance was often required to support delivery.
- One-off initiatives did not have the impact needed to address long term weaknesses, change may be incremental and objectives could take some time to achieve.
- The long-term commitment of all three tiers of local government and the private sector were needed.
- Establishing and delivering clear priorities and plans required long term leadership.
- The focus should remain on the same towns and villages but local leadership and resources were needed.
- Need to complete work in Ingleton, Settle and Bentham
- Need to be bolder and more determined to introduce change
- Seek external funding where possible
- A successful application to the Future High Street Fund would help support Skipton's town centre.

The Chairman stated that the service had become more effective in delivery and much credit was due to the officers, it had been interesting to see the challenges and thanked the officers for their attendance and presentation

**Resolved** (1) That to aid implementation and delivery of projects aimed at sustaining the District's villages and town centres, and release capacity to deliver the more significant projects, the Committee is supportive of the introduction of additional resource for the Economic Development Service.

(2) The suggestion should be explored with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority that it play a greater role in helping to resource the Economic Development work being carried out by this Council's Economic Development Team within the park area.

Chairman.