

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 15th November, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair); Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, C.P. Franks, H.C. Hamilton, S.M. Hanks, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

515 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

516 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors S.J. Haines and Dr. I.J. Johnson.

517 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

518 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor C.P. Franks declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 5 – Vale of Glamorgan Polling District and Places Review 2023. The nature of the interest was due to his role as the Chair of Trustees for the Dinas Powys Library and Activity Centre, for which he only had dispensation to speak on matters relating to this body (including grant applications) when being discussed at both Vale of Glamorgan and Dinas Powys Community Council meetings. Due to this, Councillor Franks withdrew from the meeting when the item was considered.

519 PRESENTATION: CUSTOMER RELATIONS SERVICE / C1V –

The Operational Manager for Customer Relations outlined the presentation to the Committee, the purpose of which was to update them on the progress being made with regard to Customer Relations Services and the C1V Vale of Glamorgan Council contact centre.

The Operational Manager for Customer Relations explained to the Committee there had been a number of challenges addressed by the Customer Relations Services and C1V since the last update including considerable work being undertaken with other Council officers to help facilitate the successful transition to the new waste management arrangements, the introduction of garden waste subscription service and move to a 3 weekly refuse collection which required additional resources to be employed by C1V and the creation of an online self-service subscription service to ensure that residents were supported through the changes and minimise barriers to uptake of the new subscription service. Although call volumes during this period remained high, the average wait time to respond to resident queries around waste management improved significantly due to these additional measures being put in place. Also, following the introduction of the email satisfaction survey around the same time, it was established that 71% of residents who contacted the Council by phone stated that the time they had had to wait was satisfactory albeit this was from a relatively small sample size, but additional effort would be made going forward to improve this baseline sample. With the use of an online self-service option for waste subscription services, 77% of all subscriptions were taken up online which meant that increased call demand at the Contact Centre was 10,000 lower than would have otherwise been the case, which in turn had helped to assist with improving services and responses within this area. This compared favourably with overall self-service performance for issues handled through the digital platform which, since its initial launch, currently stood at 61% and was increasing.

First contact resolution at C1V stood at 68% overall but was as high as 92% for Neighbourhood Services enquiries. The service had launched customer satisfaction surveys during the year which enabled the comparison of customer experience across all contact channels in the future. The Operational Manager for Customer Relations highlighted encouraging feedback from residents indicating that customer service teams listened to and understood their needs, and that they had good knowledge about council services.

Committee Members were informed of developments within the service including the migration from the current Avaya contact centre platform to NICE CXOne. Using the Connecting Wales procurement framework, the Council had been able to access a market leading solution whilst not increasing the cost of ownership nor experience any loss in functionality. Once the initial implementation period had been completed, further exploration of functionality available on the new platform would be undertaken to identify opportunities to improve the resident experience as well as that of colleagues within the service.

Other areas presented to the Committee included examples of user research / user centred design, including engaging residents in developing and testing services. Also, the Council had worked with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Digital on a number of Digital Transformation Fund projects that would help to deliver better experiences for residents through improved access to services as well as developing internal skills and capabilities within the Council and Customer Relation Services in particular.

The Operational Manager for Customer Relations outlined to the Committee upcoming priorities for Customer Relations which included its integration into the new digital service with Business Improvement and ICT and the close work with the Head of Digital through agreed priorities and work plans as well as contributing to the delivery of the Digital Strategy and development of the new service. Coupled with this, was the ongoing importance of Customer Relations and C1V in maintaining the pace of work in a variety of key areas such as improving service and user experience using GovService and investigating the opportunity to collaborate with external partners to drive efficiency and improve capability.

Following the presentation, a number of questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- The Chair noted the significant progress that had been made by Customer Relations and C1V as well as the overall small percentage of people who were still unsatisfied, which was signified a positive improvement.
- On Councillor Hanks' query concerning the migration to NICE CXOne and associated costs around this, it was explained that due to the Council using the procurement framework called Connecting Wales, it would gain access to this technology at a fixed price which equated to the same cost as the previous platform used by the Council, meaning that there was no additional cost in the short to medium term for the Local Authority.
- Councillor Franks commented on his previous visit to the C1V contact centre and the scale of the operation there, as well as the involvement of other key services there such as health as part of the contact centre operations. In relation to his follow up question concerning working conditions within C1V and the challenges, particularly during hot weather in the current accommodation, it was explained that as part of the 'Your space' Project, C1V would be moving to the Council's Civic Offices by early Spring of 2024 resulting in a more comfortable working environment for C1V staff by the start of next summer.
- With regard to Councillor Carroll's questions centred around staffing at C1V, including the proportion of staff working from home and in the office as well as the monitoring of productivity around this, including resolution of calls, it was explained that only a small number of staff were working from home permanently with the majority of staff working from the C1V call centre. A pilot was being undertaken around staff working from the office approximately 80% of the time with, for example, one day working from home. The intention was for this pilot to close at Christmas and to subsequently evaluate the results. In terms of monitoring various productivity measurements were being looked at such as handling times as well as overall productivity and quality of service including first contact resolution. Councillor Carroll added that it was important to look at the overall performance and resolution of residents' queries and for these to be monitored with the subsequent results brought back to Committee, possibly in terms of a six-monthly update.

- Councillor Loveluck-Edwards stressed the important distinction between call handling and the subsequent follow up and as part of this it would be useful to have a further invitation extended to the Committee to visit C1V in order to see how the call centre system worked. The Operational Manager for Customer Relations stated that such an invitation would be re-extended to the Committee in due course.
- The Vice-Chair asked a number of questions including whether any progress had been made in terms of Customer Relations working with Welsh medium schools to try and improve its Welsh capacity within the contact centre and regarding the recruitment of Customer Service Champions. It was explained that with regard to the Welsh language capacity, unfortunately not a great deal of progress had been made on this as yet. However, a number of students were recruited on a temporary basis as part of managing the changes for waste management and the Council had subsequently been able to retain a number of these students which included two Welsh speakers which helped bolster the Welsh language capacity of the contact centre. Furthermore, the Council was looking at further opportunities of working with other public sector bodies in order to make better use of combined Welsh language resources that were available and the transition to the new NICE CXOne platform would also assist in this area. With regard to the Customer Service Champions, it was explained that Customer Relations were working closely with the new Head of Digital in order to look at ways in which to make the service more resilient through a combination of technology solutions and additional human resources including the assistance of representatives from other public sector bodies to help during peak demand times.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentation, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the presentation on the Customer Relations Service / C1V be noted and that a further update on progress in relation to this topic be provided in six months' time, in conjunction with a further invitation to Members of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee to attend the C1V centre and see the work of the Customer Relations Service.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

520 VALE OF GLAMORGAN POLLING DISTRICT AND PLACES REVIEW 2023 (DCR) –

The report was presented to the Committee by the Chief Executive of the Council, in conjunction with the Electoral Registration Manager, with the purpose of the Committee considering the proposals of the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places identified within this report.

The Chief Executive set out the background and terminology surrounding this review, as well as the following:

- Under section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the next compulsory review had to be undertaken within a 16-month window between 2nd October, 2023 and 31st January, 2025.
- The Vale of Glamorgan Polling Districts and Polling Place review commenced on 2nd October, 2023.
- As part of the review there were no issues identified with Polling Districts and no changes were recommended.
- As part of the review, visits had been made to each of the current and proposed Polling Places and Stations identified as requiring attention and local Ward Members had been consulted.
- The recommendations set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.51 of the report were for implementation in readiness for the next Parliamentary Election. The same polling plan would also be utilised for the Police and Crime Commissioner Election in May 2024.
- The findings of the review proposed changes to polling places in the following electoral wards: Baruc, Buttrills, Castleland, Cadoc, Sully, Dinas Powys, Wenvoe, St Nicholas and Llancarfan, Cowbridge and St Brides Major.
- These changes would help to accommodate Vale residents within their own polling district, or, if this was not feasible, to vote in polling places situated within a neighbouring polling district.

Following the presentation, a number of questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Carroll queried Polling District HC1 which related to Cadoc - Glenbrook Inn, Dobbins Road, Barry and the difficulties for residents in attending the relevant polling station in that location. This included the suggestion of having the Polling Station located at the nearby Lidl supermarket. It was explained that Lidl had been contacted concerning the siting of a Polling Station at the location but had been unwilling to accommodate this proposal. Notwithstanding this fact, it was also explained that there was a move away from using portacabins or modular units as polling stations, given their temporary nature, their cost and their inflexibility in terms of space requirements. It was also noted that a similar situation had occurred in the Plymouth Ward where all lines of enquiry and options had also been exhausted. Common issues included the availability of buildings on a regular basis during election periods and / or the cost of using such facilities being outside the budget of the Council and did not provide any additional benefit compared to the existing facilities that the Council already used for elections.
- Councillor Carroll followed up with a query concerning the apparent anomaly with regards to the configuration of Polling Districts in the Cowbridge area and their relationship to the proposed and existing Polling places, which included SC0 and SA0 polling districts. In response, it was outlined that Cowbridge was in a unique situation due to the use of the Town Hall for a number of Polling Stations as part of the electoral process. As part of the review, the opportunity had been taken due to the expansion of Cowbridge in the western area around Declare Gardens of trying to find an additional polling station. This would result in some residents having to travel further to get to their Polling Station. On the Councillor's concerns that residents would continue to

turn up at the Town Hall Polling Station due to lack of awareness of these changes or out of habit, it was pointed out that residents would be made aware of these changes via publicity campaigns and that the relevant households would receive a notification letter outlining these changes with this going out in the New Year ahead of any scheduled election. This would basically outline the changes to the Polling Stations and locations.

- On the Chair's query concerning the review and whether this simply looked at Polling Stations rather than the Districts, it was confirmed that the review had focussed on Polling Stations; however, the queries raised by Councillor Carroll around the anomalies and the Polling Stations in Cowbridge would be noted and considered further in due course. The Chair added that it was extremely beneficial that as part of the consultation this information had been sent out to all Elected Members and they had had the time to look and digest the details in order to send back anything they thought might need to be clarified or addressed.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the proposed timetable for the review be noted and agreed.
- (2) T H A T the report, with particular reference to the proposed changes to the Polling Places and / or Polling Stations set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.51 therein, be referred to Cabinet for its consideration and agreement.
- (3) T H A T Cabinet considers referring this report to Council for its consideration with a view to approving the proposed changes with immediate effect and that this report be referred to all Town and Community Councils and the Community Liaison Committee for information.
- (4) T H A T the anomaly with regards to the configuration of polling districts in Cowbridge and its relationship with the proposed and existing polling places / polling stations be further considered in due course.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order that Cabinet can consider the report and its proposed changes, in line with the Council's statutory functions under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and that the proposals contained in this report will assist with improving electors' voting experience and raise awareness.
- (3) In order to allow the review to be accepted by Council and for the information of Town and Community Councils and the Community Liaison Committee.
- (4) In order to review and address any anomalies identified.