

**INFORMAL SCRUTINY PANEL ON COUNCIL'S CUSTOMER CARE
WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2010**

Present:

Cllr P N Seeby (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs C A Crump-Eynon

Cllr Mrs B L Perryman
Cllr J Pearce

1. APOLOGIES

Cllrs R Clemerson and Miss D R A Hart

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 26 AUGUST 2010

Agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING – None

4. COMINO CRM SYSTEM, A USERS VIEWPOINT

Guest speakers: Ilana Howard – Broxbourne Services, Janet Ochs – Field Force, and Sally Skinner – Computer Services

Sally, Janet and Ilana gave members of the panel a brief summary of how the Comino system works in practice. They explained how Comino tasks are entered on the system, how they are allocated to the relevant officers/departments and how they are closed. They also provided information on the way photos and emails can be attached to tasks, on training provided to Comino users at the Council and described the way in which managers can track open/outstanding tasks. The panel asked Ilana and Janet whether they had any insights to offer on ways the system could be improved. The following comments were made:

- Searching for/tracing existing reports is difficult. This is especially the case when details have been incorrectly entered (e.g. names mis-spelt) by another user. Searching for a previously entered task can thus be time consuming.
- The system is somewhat complicated and can be daunting to casual/infrequent users as different types of tasks need to be processed in different ways.
- Efforts to improve the system have focussed on those task types receiving the highest traffic volumes. It was suggested a full and systematic audit of all Comino areas would be welcome.

Based on Ilana and Janet's insights the panel offered several comments:

It was noted that officers had to be stationed at their desks to receive Comino tasks. It was suggested that handheld devices which allowed officers to receive tasks in the field could potentially increase efficiency and improve customer service.

It was queried whether Members of the Council should have access to the Comino system – allowing them to track individual reports/progress on tasks. It was noted that, in order to be fully proficient the system requires day to day use and the best option would be to request reports from officers.

It was suggested that Comino managers be reminded of their obligation to monitor tasks which are approaching their target date, and prompt relevant members of staff to action.

5. CUSTOMER CARE TRAINING

Guest speaker: Richard Pennell – Head of Personnel

Richard began by tabling a series of statistical data providing an overview of customer care training at the Council. The information detailed the number of staff in each department (excluding SOs) who had undertaken each of several courses relating to customer care in the past few years. The brief also included other pertinent information including staff evaluation of courses and the number of civil enforcement officers (CEOs) undertaking training. Of 698 employees at the Council, 599 either have attended, or will attend customer care training.

Richard showed members of the panel a video which is used to train CEOs to deal with a number of difficult customer situations. The video forms part of a training course designed to teach staff how to cope with, and prevent the escalation of, negative behaviour.

Members of the panel asked Richard if the Council monitored complaints relating to the attitude of staff members and if so, what percentage of total complaints fell within this category. Richard stated that currently the Council's complaints register did not have such a category.

It was agreed the Council's service organisations be requested to provide a report on customer care training they provide to staff.

6. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

The Head of Communications tabled a revised work programme incorporating actions to date and those for the future. The panel approved the work programme subject to the following amendments:

- Visit to Herts Carers' meeting, to read Hoddesdon Carers' meeting
- Efforts to promote 'Plain English' to be added, including assessing and costing an editing service as part of the Crystal Mark standard.
- Panel visit to the Broxbourne Ethnic Minority Forum to be added.
- Details of the meeting between the Head of Communications and Jamie Butler, complaints monitoring and analysis manager, Post Office Ltd, will be circulated to members in due course.

It was additionally noted that mail-outs to invite feedback from voluntary organisations on the Council's customer care have received nine responses; eight positive and one negative.

Regarding the planned visits to Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council, the Head of Communications will circulate details once agreement is reached with the two councils.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date to be arranged.