

Report of the Chair

Corporate Services Cabinet Advisory Committee – 29 March 2017

CORPORATE SERVICES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE - OUTCOMES

The main outputs / outcomes from the Corporate Services Cabinet Advisory Committee 2016/2017 have been as follows: -

1) Gender Pay Gap Project

The Cabinet Advisory Committee looked at and is still discussing the Gender Pay Gap Project. The Welsh Specific Equality Regulations 2011, the so-called 'Equal Pay Duty', required the Council to address not only disparities of pay but also to address the structural labour market factors that can cause gender pay gaps. Hourly pay gaps are straightforward – there is a difference in rates of pay between men and women. Structural pay gaps are slightly more complex to identify – this is when there are significant gender differences between and across grade structures and working patterns (Full Time and Part Time, contract types etc.).

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development invited Dr Alison Parken of Cardiff University, the leading research specialist in this area, to undertake further analysis of our workforce data. The Council is continuing to evaluate our data in order to assist with developing an action plan, if required, to ensure it complies with the regulations.

The work is ongoing.

2) Smoke Free Spaces

The Committee received an update regarding Smoke Free Spaces which outlined the responsible attitude that the Authority had taken with regards to smoking and the activities that had been introduced in order to help people stop smoking. This was a high profile activity which had been well received by the public.

Actions had been taken against people smoking in work who had been prosecuted while driving and against individuals dealing with counterfeit cigarettes.

The programme of activities undertaken by the Authority included schools, play areas, city centre development and having a smoke free beach at Caswell. On 27 April 2016, as part of Swansea's Healthy City Commitment and following work within the city under the Smoke free spaces umbrella, the City and County of Swansea launched the trial of a smoke free beach at Caswell Bay, Swansea. The launch of the voluntary ban was in collaboration with a number of partner agencies such as ABMU, Public Health, Ash Wales, Stop smoking Wales and Surfers against sewage. Prior to the launch the businesses at Caswell were consulted and signage was erected.

The launch was very well supported and children from Bishopston Primary School were invited to take part in organised activities on the beach arranged by the Authority's Play team and the Environment Centre. Fortunately, it was a dry sunny day and support was also shown from the local lifeguards and the surf school at Caswell. The Lord Mayor officiated over the event and formally launched the smoke free beach surrounded by a number of local councillors, heads of service and interested parties. Media and social media involvement ensured the launch had both local and national coverage and prompted a series of chats on social media sites. Details of the evaluation methods used to gauge the success of the event, the questionnaire responses received and a summary of responses received on social media were provided.

It was concluded that the trial ban had been well received with 90% of the people questioned being in support of the ban. 88% wanted to see similar restrictions on other beaches within Swansea. However, only 3% of people said it influenced their decision to use the beach. 94% of those questioned agreed that asking people not to smoke set a good example to young people. Out of the 136 people questioned, 90% were non-smokers.

The questionnaire generated a lot of comments around litter with 91% of people agreeing that refraining from smoking on the beach kept it cleaner. Although there was support for the ban, only 39% of the people were aware of it. If the Authority planned to make other beaches within Swansea smoke free then further consideration to signage was required due to under half the people surveyed (46%) claimed to have seen the sign with 56% feeling the sign was unclear. The signage and publicity around the ban was vital to the success of the voluntary ban.

An update was also provided regarding smoke free school gates. The soft launch of 'Best Start Swansea' the Jacks family took place in October half term, the Authority followed up with the launch of our Smoke free school gates on 3 November 2016.

3) Agency Workers

The Committee considered the case for insourcing responsibility for agency staffing from a commercial perspective and received a detailed report from the Commercial and Commissioning Unit, which compared having an internal agency worker system with the existing arrangements.

It was explained that the number of agency workers had to reduce substantially in order for an internal agency to be formed and be manageable.

The work is ongoing.

4) Invest to Save

The Committee received a report which provided details of the Welsh Government report entitled Investing-to –Save 4 – Short-term investment for long-term benefit. The report provided an update about public service efficiency and improvement projects that had received Welsh Government Invest-to-Save

funding. The report stated that to minimise the negative impact on front-line services resulting from reducing budget settlements, it was paramount to find more cost-effective approaches to delivery and to focus greater attention on prevention and innovation in the delivery of public services.

The grant scheme was introduced to encourage innovation. Available funds were provided as interest free loans that are repayable in full, subject to negotiation with Welsh Government. The Fund had been available since 2009. The loans were non-negotiable and were repayable over 3 years and the successful applicant must put 25% towards the overall cost. Less than 5% of local authorities had generated enough savings to make the loan repayments.

As the Council had managed its budget, there was sufficient cash in the contingency fund to pay for any schemes the Authority wished to pursue. Any potential schemes would be dealt with on merit.

5) Helping Hands

Following the visit to Helping Hands at the Botanical Gardens, the Chair gave a verbal update on the visit in March 2016.

The Chair referred to the background to the development of the garden, which is one of the many different schemes offered to staff by the service. The success of the scheme and the commitment by the volunteer staff continue to be excellent.

6) Customer Contact Aspect

Councillor C E Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance requested that the Committee look at Customer Contact Aspect and provided the Terms of Reference. He requested that the Committee assess the customer contact services of the Authority and how to improve.

The following that were contained in the Terms of Reference: -

- Support Customer Service Model;
- Preferred method of contact;
- Digital Contact – Cost less;
- Hours of opening / out of hours;
- Follow up / Keeping customer informed – reduce multiple contact;
- Customer Charter / The Swansea Standard – Impact;
- Non-Customer facing etiquette – Phone handling, e-mail.

The Head of Communications and Engagement and the Customer Service Manager presented an update report on Corporate Customer Services.

The Authority's vision was to:

- To improve customer experience.
- To achieve a fundamental shift in customer contact to digital self- service channels.

- To consolidate current customer contact.
- To use customer insight to improve services and achieve the other aims.

Phase 1 brought together five areas of the organisation, as below, into one new service across three sites:

- Contact Swansea
- Switchboard
- Environmental Services
- Housing Repairs
- Blue Badges

In November 2015, contact for the Highways service also migrated into Customer Services. All telephony teams were relocated and amalgamated into one site in the Civic Centre in January 2016 and the multi skilling of advisors commenced. In order not to lose the knowledge and experience gained over many years, each advisor had a 'primary' skill and 'secondary' skill so that they can assist each other during periods of high demand, sickness absence and annual leave. Staff restructures had saved £235,000 by losing 11 full time equivalent posts.

During the first year the Service had answered 526,642 calls and served 40,615 customers at the Contact Centre face to face, with only 7 Corporate Complaints received in total across both channels since the service was created. A Welsh language Line was introduced in April 2016 and constant review of the website and increasing the ability to report or request services online was starting to pay dividends, encouraging our residents to contact us '**digitally by choice**'. This had resulted in fewer calls through the switchboard and less face to face visits to the Contact Centre. Access times would also be standardised across all services which would be Mon-Thurs 08:30-17:00 and 08:30-16:30 on a Friday.

Development proposals for the Service included procuring voice recognition services for customers and building an 'in house' Corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which would provide the Council with more control and flexibility to develop the product to meet needs and vision of working towards a 'single customer record' across the Authority. The customer contact strategy identified areas for consideration in Phase 2.

7) Equalities and Welsh Language

Presentations were provided regarding Equality and Welsh Language Standards.

A detailed and informative update was provided regarding the Welsh Language Standards. The following was outlined: -

- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure (2011)
- The old system containing Welsh Language Schemes compared to the new Welsh Language Standards and potential costs for failure to comply
- Timetable, including regulations, compliance notice and implementation dates
- Principles of the Standards

- The actual Standards
- Progress
- Complaints
- Issues
- Concerns
- The future

A detailed and informative Equality Update presentation was provided. The following was outlined: -

- Strategic Equality Plan
- Equality and Diversity Review Report
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Equality Engagement
- Looking ahead.....
- Equality Update