

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

12 September 2023

Present:

Chair: Councillor Amir Moshenson

Councillors: Dan Anderson
June Baxter
Govind Bharadia

Graham Henson
Maxine Henson

Apologies received: Councillor Eden Kulig

Absent: Councillor Vipin Mithani Councillor Samir Sumaria

53. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at the meeting.

54. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following declarations of interest were made by Members at the meeting:

Item 7 – Customer Experience Scrutiny Review

Councillor Amir Moshenson, the Chair, declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in that he was part of the Challenge Panel.

Councillor Graham Henson, the Vice-Chair, declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in that he was part of the Challenge Panel.

55. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

56. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

57. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

58. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

Resolved Items

59. Customer Experience Scrutiny Review

The Committee received the Customer Experience Scrutiny Review, and the Final Report.

The report provided the findings and conclusions from the Customer Experience Scrutiny Review Group. The Review had been commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and took place between February 2023 and August 2023.

The Borough had made significant improvements to its Customer Service experience. In order to ascertain how the council could fulfil its corporate objective of “Putting Residents First” and with changes in the way the Council delivered services, it was necessary to develop a larger understanding of what residents required.

Given the closure of the Civic Centre, a key function of the customer experience, there had been extensive research and discussion into how Harrow residents engaged with the borough in the future.

The Committee had undertaken site visits to Greenhill Library and Gayton Road – the Council’s new front-doors, after the closure of the Civic Centre. Services included Customer Services and Emergency Services (Homelessness, Adults/Children Safeguarding).

In the discussion that ensued, Members raised questions and the following issues:

- How was the Council going to engage with communities, which were not previously reached? There was need to reach out to additional

communities, and engage with them. Therefore recommendation 4.4 in the Final Report would require altering to reflect that.

- How were digital services being tailored to ensure that it was accessible to all residents, particularly those who were not “tech savvy”? There were a number of positive aspects in the Final Report, and it was acknowledged that accessing digital services was an ongoing endeavour. This was envisaged to improve over time, particularly for vulnerable groups.
- What was being done to ensure that Council employees who were “rude” to residents received appropriate training to improve their attitudes? It was imperative that more training be provided to ensure that vulnerable residents, particularly the disabled, were treated with dignity and sensitivity. Council employees in customer-facing roles would benefit from such training.
- Members requested that recommendation 4.5 in the Final Report could add an “escalation process”; and
- The Chair and the Vice-Chair communicated their thanks to the officers and Members who had participated in the challenge panels and noted the collaborative manner in which the review had been done.

Officers would ensure that the Recommendations in the Final Report were amended to reflect the Committee’s comments.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report of the Customer Experience Scrutiny Review be noted;
- (2) subject to the inclusion of the amendments outlined above, the recommendations included in the Final Report be agreed;
- (3) the Review’s recommendations, as amended, be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 6.52 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Amir Moshenson
Chair