



CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

8 May 2014

PRESENT:

Directors

Robert Buckley (Chair)
 Sheila Bouitieh
 Joanne Carr
 Pauline Dillon
 Kathryn Ferdinand
 Eileen Gill
 John Hamilton
 Gordon Spring

Advisers

Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Julie McCartney	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Deborah Ewart	Housing Services Manager
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Martin Poulter	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Phil Hindmarsh	Local Environmental Services
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 27 February 2014 were approved as a correct record.

2 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2014/15

The committee received a report on 9 May 2013 detailing the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for the period 2013/14. The Service Agreement is reviewed and updated annually.

An updated service agreement 2014/15 was submitted. The updated agreement incorporates amendments, updates and performance management framework, and contains a review timetable to ensure the agreement is updated annually with customer involvement.

Positively, the Council's Local Environmental Services will continue to deliver the same level of service as agreed in the 2013/14 service level agreement, with charges for pest control also remaining the same.

Details of the key updates and amendments in this years' service agreement were reported.

The Grounds Maintenance contract is funded by the Council's Housing Revenue Account and LES has confirmed the budget for 2014/15 of £1,480,000, which remains the same as for 2013/14. In addition the inspection of play areas and minor maintenance associated with play items are included in this budget.

This also includes for 2014/15 a budget of £277,750 to enable LES to deliver tree maintenance on land managed by the Company as well as any exceptional items of responsive maintenance identified by the partnership.

The committee discussed the updated agreement in detail and in particular commented on the offer by Local Environmental Services to meet with councillors, grass cuttings left on paths, particularly around older persons properties, the identification of specific areas and damaged verges.

The committee suggested looking at whether more litter was on streets on collection days.

It was noted that there had been an increase in reports to pest control in the last year and it was agreed that an update around pest control would be included in the next estate management activity report. The committee also suggested that environmental officers talk to the local offices.

Overall, the committee was satisfied with the steps being made and took comfort from the fact that there was a smaller decline than expected. It did express disappointment though that there were more people dissatisfied with their estates and felt that this needed addressing.

RESOLVED – (i) That the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for 2014/15 be approved.

(ii) That the committee receive a report in September 2014 on estate management activity undertaken in 2013/14 (including pest control activity).

3 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2013/14

The committee received an annual update on anti-social behaviour performance in the following areas: -

- Strategic Assessment
- Performance Update
- Customer Satisfaction
- Referrals to other agencies
- Vetting and exclusions
- Hate Crime (including security measures)
- Domestic abuse (including security measures)
- Customer Assessment Tool

- Victim Support
- Mental Health Link Worker
- Non-Attendance Panel
- Safeguarding Adults and Children
- Families Gateshead
- Anti-Social, Crime and Policing Bill

A particular concern was expressed by the committee about the new street lighting and the effect this was having on vulnerable tenants and it was felt that this was an area that needed to be monitored by the Company. The Director of Customers and Communities agreed to speak to the Council's Group Director of Development and Enterprise about the committee's concerns.

The committee felt that the Company needed to be doing more work with schools and young persons. It was noted that the Company did do work with younger people and schools when it got the opportunity but accepted that it would like to do more. It was suggested producing a briefing pack for teachers via National Citizenship to put the message out differently.

Concern was expressed that the Anti-Social, Crime and Policing Bill would increase costs. It was noted that it shouldn't change the Company's approach and there may actually be some cost benefits.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.
- (ii) That the committee receive an update at its next meeting on victim support and the new Victim Support Champion.

4 MULTI-STOREY MANAGEMENT – YEAR END UPDATE 2013/14

The committee received a summary of activity carried out by the Multi-Storey Management Team during 2013/14 in the following areas: -

- Concierge and Cleaning Review
- Performance against Service Standards
- Repairs in communal areas
- Small Tasks
- New tenant visits
- Complaints and Compliments
- Training and Development
- Multi-Storey Improvement Group
- Customer Inspections
- Improvement Projects
- Priorities 2014/15

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

5 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The committee received an overview of the plan to achieve Customer Service Excellence.

The last full assessment was carried out over three years ago, therefore the Company is now required to repeat this process to maintain its CSE status.

The framework covers five criteria associated with customer service, details of which were reported.

A matrix of information has been provided to the assessor on 8 October 2014. There will be a mock assessment on site on 22 October 2014 with the full onsite assessment on 18 and 19 November 2014.

In order to prepare for the assessment, a working group of officers across the Company is being established to support the production of the matrix.

A working group of customers to work with the Company reviewing the evidence log and preparing for the assessment is also being established.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the plan for undergoing reaccreditation of Customer Service Excellence be noted.
- (ii) That a further report following the assessment in November be received.

6 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2013/14

The committee received details of complaints and compliments performance for the year ended 31 March 2014.

The number of complaints recorded in 2013/14 has reduced compared to 2012/13. However, the number of Step 2 complaints escalated to review stage remained reasonably stable. This was also reflected in the results of satisfaction surveys carried out in the same period.

Performance against the 10 day response target for step 2 investigations has also improved and there was an improvement in performance against the 20 day response target for Step 3 complaints.

The far greatest cause of complaints has consistently been quality of service.

The committee also received examples of compliments and updates around the complaint review, Complaints Scrutiny Panel and service improvements.

- RESOLVED – That the information be noted and details of complaints investigated by the Housing Ombudsman be included in future reports.

7 MOVING FORWARD CUSTOMER TRAINING PROGRAMME – ANNUAL REVIEW

The committee received an update on progress with the Moving Forward Training programme 2013/14 and the programme for 2014/15.

At 31 March 2014, 16 courses had taken place, including nine demand led and all seven scheduled sessions, with a total of 162 people attending. On average, there have been 10 attendees per course, which is an increase on 2012/13 year's performance of eight per course.

The Company has also delivered a number of Energy Best Deal sessions between December 2013 and March 2014 and these will be delivered again in 2013/14. The committee was particularly satisfied with the energy savings for customers as a result of attending these sessions and suggested that these actual savings be highlighted in the Company's newspaper.

The Moving Forward training programme for 2014/15 was launched in March 2014. The programme offers eight scheduled and 13 demand led courses ranging from gardening managing stress.

- RESOLVED –
- (i) That the information be noted.
 - (ii) That actual energy savings by customers attending the Energy Best Deal sessions be highlighted in the Company's newspaper.
 - (iii) That details of the Energy Angels Scheme be brought to a future meeting of the committee.

8 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE

The committee received an update on customer involvement activity for the fourth quarter of 2013/14.

During the period, 64 involvement activities took place. Customers have been involved in activities on over 980 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.

There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during the period and details of these were reported.

Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) continue to meeting on a regular basis to help drive improvements around service delivery across the Company. There are currently eight SIGs and during the year they have influenced service and achieved a range of outcomes, details of which were reported.

Tenant led mystery shopping remains key for checking whether service standards have been achieved and details of mystery shopping exercises carried out during 2013/14 were reported.

There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure the Company continues to involve customers in the way services have fallen and details of performance during the year was reported.

Details of external recognition and activities planned for 2014/15 were also reported.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

9 FORWARD PLAN

A forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year was submitted.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee will take place on Thursday 11 September 2014 at 10am in Room S21, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.