

Notes

of an informal meeting of

Five Councils Partnership Corporate Services Joint Committee members

held on Wednesday, 30 March 2022 at 2.00 pm
HELD VIRTUALLY

The meeting was broadcasted live and can be watched here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDqldgLN-4M>

Open to the Public, including the Press

Present:

Members:

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Debby Hallett, Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker, South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr David Rouane, South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Kenneth Crookes, Hart District Council
Cllr James Radley, Hart District Council
Cllr Alex Rennie, Havant Borough Council
Cllr Ros Wyke, Mendip District Council
Cllr Liz Leyshon, Mendip District Council

Officers: Andrew Down (5CP Commercial Director), Stuart Brown (Mendip Chief Executive), Karen Dhaliwal (Director, Hartley Law), Amanda Fincham (Customer service and Business Support Manager, Havant) Matt Goodwin (Client Relationship Director), Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnerships Manager, South and Vale), Patricia Hughes (Joint Chief Executive, Hart District Council), Candida Mckelvey (Democratic Services Officer, South and Vale), Paul Merrick (5CP Head of IT), Susan Parker (Head of Programmes, Mendip)

Also present: Capita representatives Emma Hall (Account Director) and Gareth Stemp (Head of Customer Services)

1 Opening announcements

Lead officer (Matt Goodwin) opened the meeting with some reminders about informal meeting procedure. Capita representatives present were Emma Hall and Gareth Stemp, and Amanda Fincham from Havant will be in attendance later to discuss customer services. Dale Wood from Capita was unable to attend.

2 Chairs announcements and urgent business

None.

3 Apologies for absence

Lula Bowerman sent her apologies. Cllr Alex Rennie was present from Havant Borough Council.

4 Declarations of interest

None.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 1 December 2021 were noted with no amendments raised.

6 Annual Service Plans 2022-23

Lead officer introduced this item. It was a joint plan with Capita, so Capita would also speak to this item.

The service plans had been updated but with a similar format to previous years. Highlights:

- Customer services – focus on call quality, customer satisfaction, progressing innovations and changes that lead to a channel shift and call reductions.
- IT – securing service model changes as needed, moving over to The Cloud, responding to any unitary changes for councils.
- Revenue and benefits – using technology to enhance council tax collections (via TelSolutions), and work to improve quality of claims. Cost of living and Covid related actions feature also, e.g. the £150 council tax energy rebate.
- Land charges – bringing in transfer of some services to HM Land Registry from 2023-24.

The lead officer advised on plans to develop a longer term, Strategic, Plan – the committee would be updated in June 2022.

Emma Hall added that the annual plan was a collaborative, living document.

Questions from committee:

- It was confirmed that there was a disaster recovery plan in response to a question. Paul Merrick responded that there was annual testing to ensure the disaster recovery plan was adequately resourced for. There was a proposal to split the tenancy for Microsoft Office 365 to give councils more autonomy. This was still under review.

Resolved:

Committee noted the report

7 Capita performance report

Lead officer opened this item.

The main points were:

1. An improvement on customer service call response times at the contact centre.

2. The revenue and benefits lines will be hit by a high level of calls due to support needed for financial hardships and requests for payment support. There was also the Energy Rebate which was driving call traffic.

3. For Revenues and Benefits, the next report to committee will report on the annual measures. There may be issues around changes of circumstances which could put that KPI at risk. Capita had also been helping with off-contract work, such as government initiatives on Covid Grants and relief schemes, plus the Energy Rebate. The work being done here was important to recognise and was additional work to the contract.

Questions from Committee:

- RP4 2020: Problem due to correction of erroneous summons. Had this been progressed? Response from officer was that it was not completed yet, it needed to be joint. The technical resource was diverted due to government initiatives, but was now back in focus, to work jointly as soon as possible. Detailed analysis was needed on individual accounts. Weekly updates on cases were being provided. The delay was in part at the councils' request (resource issues, other initiatives affecting workloads) and now the focus was on getting this moving.

Action: Chair requested that the updates were forwarded to South and Vale members of the committee. Susan Harbour to action.

Resolved:

Committee noted this report.

8 Customer quality update

Capita representatives Emma Hall and Gareth Stemp opened this item. Amanda Fincham from Havant Borough Council also joined to brief the Committee on her work on call listening.

Gareth Stemp provided a presentation that covered:

1. Quality – a priority in customer services – key areas are training, hiring the right staff, quality assurance, coaching and real-time support. Capita listen to calls and fed back to staff. The call structure had improved over the years and was tried and tested.

2. Quality assurance – an officer from each authority will receive training from a quality assurance specialist, and Amanda Fincham was one of the officers. A secure Teams site had been created for each authority to manage call listening. The process was live for Havant and Mendip and was about to go live for South and Vale. Amanda Fincham shared her experiences of call listening, she tended to listen to a small sample to monitor the process. So far, she had discussed one change with Capita, but was overall happy with the call quality. This method worked well and doesn't take operators away from real-life customers, as opposed to the mystery shopper option. Some of the councillors expressed thanks for this process.

A councillor asked about the performance measure for call times picked up in 20 seconds, as it had improved. Was the quality assurance work helping? Capita did respond that vulnerable customers were a priority at the moment, and operators were trained to make sure all queries were thoroughly dealt with in the first instance. There was also confirmation that if a poor-quality call was heard, officers would speak to Gareth Stemp to discuss.

Another question was raised about whether data can be provided on all aspects of call handling, including, for example, the total and average times taken. This was so we could understand the experience for those experiencing delays of more than 20 seconds. Lead officer explained that the data was available but reminded committee that current central government initiatives were driving higher call volumes.

9 Exclusion of the public

To consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds

that:

(i) it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and

(ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Resolved:

The committee excluded the public to consider confidential items. Those remaining in attendance were committee members and the required officers.

10 Confidential items

The committee were briefed on

1. Update on the Somerset Unitary Authority (verbal update)
2. Havant and East Hampshire – ending of the Joint Management Agreement (verbal update)
3. Strategic IT Update (presentation)