

South Lakeland District Council
Council
17 December 2019

Portfolio: Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio

Report from: Cllr Eric Morrell

To work with all Members, the community and organisations in developing and implementing locality working, case management, and specialist services as part of the Council's Customer connect programme.

Delivery of the Council Plan objectives in relation to quality of service and high performance culture.

The organisation of the Authority relating to the Council's central services, including Employee relations.

Providing and maintaining parks infrastructure.

Polices, plans and strategies

- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Customer Charter and Contact Strategy
- Member Development and Training Plan
- Workforce Plan (to be reviewed under customer connect programme)

Key Areas

- Customer services (operational)
- Car Parking (operations)
- Waste Management (operations and service optimisation)
- Street scene
- Member Services
- Member Training and Development
- Legal and Committee Services and HR Services
- Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)
- Corporate Health and Safety

Customer services (operational)

The transformation programme, Customer Connect is still on track to deliver better access to services for customers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will create more opportunities to self-serve through improved digital options.

Customer and Commercial Services are undergoing transition as part of phase 2 of the Customer Connect project. The service will see in the introduction of a new system in 2020, which will allow them to act upon more services requests at the first point of contact such as a taxi license applications. The enhanced delivery of new capabilities within the authority will improve the service and experience delivered to customers and staff.

There are over 600 core service processes across the organisation taken from the local government association activity list and a significant number of minor processes; the work of the service redesign is to focus on the areas where there is the biggest opportunity to improve. To do this, the core processes have been prioritised based on customer impact, volume and customer efficiency. The areas with the biggest opportunities were identified as the main focus for the redesign process. This task is ongoing and increased access to digitally enabled services will be rolled out during 2020, including 'My Account.'

Car parking (operations)

Working collaboratively with the Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio the Council is seeking ways to increase car parking capacity within the areas of highest demand.

The Council is also offering free car parking in Council owned car parks every Sunday in December to attract both visitors and residents into local towns supporting the local economy.

In July 2019 the Parking Services team was highly commended for best practise in finance and statistics reporting at the Parking Annual Report Awards by Councils awards (PATROL PARC). The category in which the team was nominated acknowledges high-quality in the transparency of reports and the presentation of statistics and recognises the hard work from all employees within the parking services team.

Waste Management (operations and service optimisation) and Street scene

Throughout 2019/20 the Customer and Commercial Services and Climate Emergency and Localism portfolios are working in partnership to support the waste management and street scene functions.

To date there has been numerous social media messages to promote recycling and waste minimisation during recent months, supporting the Councils green initiative. The next issue of South Lakeland News is scheduled for distribution in December, and will include significant content about waste and recycling.

The Waste Collection Service operates at peak levels over the Christmas and New Year period, and householders will be encouraged to recycle as much as possible, with extra bags available for householders wishing to recycle more plastic.

There is an expectation that over the festive period there will be an increased level of card recycling from cards and increased home deliveries arising from internet shopping.

The street cleansing service has trialled 2 electric vehicles. In both cases the daily operational mileage exceeded the range of the vehicle. The service continues to monitor new vehicle technologies, particularly with regard to alternative fuels.

Member Services and Member Training and Development

The 2019/20 training plan is now underway and a variety of training opportunities have been made available for members. Examples of the training available include:

- Social Media and Web skills
- Digital Skills Workshop
- Introduction to Your Ward
- Committee Inductions
- GDPR, FOI and Data Management
- Chairing Committee Skills
- Submitting Member Expenses Online

Member Services are continuing to encourage members to receive committee papers electronically through the use of corporate IT kit. Corporate kit allows members to access council used systems such as Skype for Business, Mod Gov and SharePoint which support the Customer Connect Programme and GDPR regulations. In total 42 out of 51 members now use SLDC corporate kit.

The Member Support Steering Group (MSSG) has trialled the Local Government Association Councillor E-Learning Package to allow Members to undertake training remotely. The feedback received to date has been positive and it has been circulated to all members with corporate kit. The MSSG will be working towards achieving the Level 2 North West Employers to coincide with the Customer Connect Programme.

Legal and Committee Services and HR Services

Legal and Committee services have fully embedded the new report writing system across the organisation. This new system allows officers to write, share and submit reports digitally and introduces a more effective tracking method for all committees.

The HR team has been heavily involved in supporting the Customer Connect Project in terms of people, change and transition work streams in phases 1 and 2. The HR team have supported managers in conducting competency based interview, managing change, building resilience training and drop in sessions for all employees in phases 1 and 2.

The roles appointed in Phase 1 of the Customer Connect Project became effective from 1 April for the Leadership Team and 1 May 2019 for all other Phase 1 appointments. 95 Competency based interviews were conducted over a 3 week period in Phase 1, who have now entered the transition phase.

192 competency based interviews were conducted over a 9 week period for all roles within phase 2. The appointment of roles will become effective from 1 January 2020 who will then also enter the transition phase.

Leisure, Public Realm, (Parks and Open Spaces (Including cemeteries, trees, woodland and playground improvement)

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy identifies the importance of good quality green spaces throughout the district. The strategy is designed to providing clear direction for the management of council owned parks and open spaces over ten years. The strategy is reviewing the day to day maintenance and identifying improvements to parks and open spaces through working in partnership with communities, local businesses and partners. The strategy has incorporated a variety of different spaces including parks, sports fields, trees and woodlands and cemeteries.

In May 2019 new playgrounds were opened at Millerground, Rayrigg Meadow, Yew Tree Playing Fields and Maryfell, Sedbergh. All the works undertaken at each park were completed by working in collaboration with community groups and have been designed to be inclusive and provide capital investment for 20 years.

Following a £125,000 investment and funding raised with the Friends of Abbot Hall Playground the Abbot Hall playground has been revamped. An opening ceremony took place on 1 September for families and included activities such as face painting.

The Council has been working with the Village Society to secure the work plan for the improvements at Broadgate children's playground in Grasmere following a £90,000 investment. The new playground installation works commenced in October 2019.

£20,000 of funding has been secured from the National Lottery for park improvements at North Lonsdale Road, Ulverston. Funding raising is still ongoing and a consultation event was held in October 2019.

The Council has been contacting parish and town councils across the district to invite proposals for tree planting sites. To date six parish council owned sites have been secured with a total of 36 trees to be planted across the sites, planting will commence in January 2020.

The Parish tree planting letter sent out also identified locations to plant 55 trees on SLDC owned land, 8 trees on LDNPA owned land and 9 trees on private land adjacent to publically accessible areas. In total the Parish Tree Planting Letter has identified 173 tree planting locations. A scheme in Ford Park in Ulverston will create a new Arboretum and community orchard when 65 trees are planted.

The Beckside Community Centre have raised £10,000 towards an outdoor fitness trail which will incorporate outdoor gym equipment and a waymarked route linking local playgrounds and green spaces to encourage healthier lifestyles. A consultation with residents was completed in October 2019 and demonstrated support from local residents for small groups of outdoor gym equipment in the large area of open space close to the Beckside Community Centre. The deadline for tender submissions is 18 December 2019, with an evaluation taking place in January 2020, with the aim to have the equipment installed by April 2020.

In partnership with leisure providers GLL, the Council has been supporting the promotion of leisure facilities available in Windermere, Ulverston and Kendal. These have included opportunities such as outdoor swimming lessons for children, health check days for over 55's and workplace sport torments.

Corporate Health and Safety

Throughout 2019 the Council has been using the Health and Safety Strategic Improvement Plan to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of staff is continuously improved. This plan is regularly updated and reviewed at the Councils Internal Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board.

The Council has been promoting of the Reach for Zero campaign throughout the authority to ensure that all staff regularly complete Desk Assessments and are aware of the reporting methods should a health and safety risk occur.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee are continuing to meet on a quarterly basis. Each quarter a safety summary is presented to the committee to outline the accident data, what is affecting the Council, what the Council is doing well and methods to improve. Most recently the committee considered a review of the Councils Safety Management System and how to incorporate changes to make it more user friendly.

A key issue has been raised by employees working in the street scene department regarding their safety when working on a highway to empty waste bins and recycling boxes. Dangerous manoeuvres by motorists puts staff at risk of injury, therefore the service has been introducing new signage on the waste collection vehicles to make drivers aware of personnel working in the vicinity of vehicles as well as using other communication tools such as South Lakeland News to highlight the risks imposed by dangerous manoeuvres to residents.

The Annual Health and Safety Report has been considered at Cabinet in November and provides an overview of the Councils actions in relation to Health, Safety and Wellbeing through 2018/19. A key highlight within the annual report is that a total of 30 accidents were reported which is continuing the trend of a low number of accidents.