

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, WIGSTON, ON 29 JANUARY 2014 AT 6PM.**

IN ATTENDANCE:

J Kaufman - Chairman

Councillors: L Broadley, B Dave, S Dickinson, L Kaufman, & P Swift.

Officers in Attendance: I Dobson, A Kupusarevic, P Loveday

Minute Ref.	Narrative	Officer Respo-nsible
24.	<p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>H Loydall</p>	
25.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
26.	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2013 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.</p>	
27.	<p><u>THE NATIONAL LIVING WAGE</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the report of the Chief Financial Officer, as set out in report pages 3 to 7, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>The Finance Manager illustrated the financial projections outlined in Appendix 1 to the report on report pages 5 which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>He informed Members that based on the current staffing profile, there is no additional cost to the Council in implementing the Living Wage from 2014 to 2018 based on a local government payrise of 1% and the annual uprating of the Living Wage at 3%.</p>	

	<p>He went on to say that this is due to staff moving up through the increments of their payscales. Further, he added that changes to staffing profile could result in a small cost to the Council.</p> <p>The Electoral and Democratic Services Officer summarised Appendix 2 to the report on report pages 6-7 which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>He explained that the appendix showed in the cases referred to that there is a very small financial advantage to being paid the Living Wage due to the reduction in the amount received in benefits such as Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Support.</p> <p>The Committee broadly agreed that the principle of an employer contributing more to an individual's total income is important in that it reduces the cost to the taxpayer.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: That Council is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue to pay existing and future staff the Living Wage as a minimum by supplementing existing payscales where necessary2. Performance monitoring of external contracts will include updates about working towards payment of the Living Wage
<p>28.</p>	<p>CUSTOMER SERVICE REVIEW</p> <p>The Committee noted the report of the Interim Head of Customer Services, as set out in report pages 8 to 9, which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>The Interim Head of Customer Services summarised the aims of the review as providing a responsive service to customers that meet needs and understand demands of service users. Members heard that surveys on the use of libraries and cashiers were being taken to collect data.</p> <p>He went on to say that work was being undertaken to understand channels of contact such as face to face, phone, self service, kiosks and internet. He informed Members that the way that Customer Services operate was being considered with different models being explored. These were summarised as: 1) Officers with technical knowledge sitting in the customer service area 2) Improved training to up-skill Customer Service staff 3) Consideration of switchboard or call centre.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the current review of Customer Service provision at the libraries within the Borough. There was a broad consensus that the service in Oadby should continue due to the distance from the Council Offices and inadequate bus services to Wigston. In addition, Members agreed that if the data justified withdrawing a service from Wigston and South Wigston then it should be considered. Members stated that they had not received any complaints from residents about the trial closure at Wigston and South Wigston.</p>

The Committee raised concern about the closure of the switchboard on Wednesday afternoons at 4pm. In particular, the message that is played to callers stating that the council offices are closed was criticised as being confusing. Members agreed that the switchboard should remain open during service cover times as it is a hub of communication. Concerns were also raised about the effectiveness of the phone system in general and examples were given about not being able to get through to Officers. It was suggested that a list of direct dials is given to Members and relevant numbers publicised in Letterbox.

The Interim Head of Customer Services informed Members that the switchboard and Customer Service centre at the Council Offices closed at 4pm to allow training and team meetings to take place. He went on to say that the message could be altered to reduce confusion. In addition, he explained that staffing levels prohibit a cover system due to the employment of 4.5 full time officers.

The Committee agreed that a rota system should be in place to ensure that the switchboard remains open and expressed concern about staffing levels that could not sustain switchboard cover.

Members suggested that the Customer Service experience should aim to deal with issues in one visit. Also, it was suggested that web based/electronic transactions need to be increased.

RECOMMENDED: That Council is recommended to:

1. Keep Customer Services and the switchboard open from 8:45am – 4:45pm Mon – Thurs and 8:45am – 4pm on Fridays.
2. Withdrawal of Customer Service provision at Wigston and South Wigston Libraries subject to supporting data being provided.
3. Consideration of whether staffing levels within Customer Services are sufficient.
4. Useful phone numbers printed in Letterbox for use by residents.
5. Useful direct dials of Officers for Members.

The meeting ended at 7:21 p.m