



Meeting: **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
Date: **TUESDAY 2 JULY 2013**
Time: **5.00PM**
Venue: **COMMITTEE ROOM**
To: **Councillors J Crawford (Chair), R Price (Vice Chair), L Casling, I Chilvers, M Dyson, M Hobson, D Mackay, J McCartney and D Peart.**

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

2. Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee held on 23 April 2013 and 7 May 2013 (pages 1 to 8 attached).

3. Disclosures of Interest

A copy of the Register of Interest for each Selby District Councillor is available for inspection at www.selby.gov.uk.

Councillors should declare to the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest in any item of business on this agenda which is not already entered in their Register of Interests.

Councillors should leave the meeting and take no part in the consideration, discussion or vote on any matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Councillors should also declare any other interests. Having made the declaration, provided the other interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest, the Councillor may stay in the meeting, speak and vote on that item of business.

If in doubt, Councillors are advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer.

4. Chair's Address to the Scrutiny Committee

5. Call In

6. Time of Meetings

7. The New Selby War Memorial Hospital – Minor Injuries Unit

To consider the report from the Harrogate and District Hospital Foundation Trust (pages 9 to 15 attached).

8. Access Selby Service Provision – Customer Contact Centre

To consider the report from the Acting Lead Officer, Community Support (pages 16 to 18 attached).

9. Access Selby Service Provision – Benefits and Local Taxation Service

To consider the report from the Business Manager (pages 19 to 21 attached).

10. National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Task and Finish Group

To consider the report from the Democratic Services Officer (pages 22 to 27 attached).

Jonathan Lund
Deputy Chief Executive

Dates of next meetings
23 July 2013 (provisional)
24 September 2013
22 October 2013 (provisional)

Enquiries relating to this agenda, please contact Palbinder Mann on:
Tel: 01757 292207, Email: pmann@selby.gov.uk.

Scrutiny Committee

Venue:	Committee Room
Date:	23 April 2013
Present:	Councillors W Nichols (Chair), R Price (Vice Chair), I Chilvers, M Dyson, M Hobson, C Pearson, D Mackay and D Peart.
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors R Sweeting.
Also Present:	Councillor G Ivey, Councillor Carl Les – North Yorkshire County Council, Ray Busby – North Yorkshire County Council and Helen Hugill – North Yorkshire Ambulance Service.
Officers Present:	Keith Dawson – Director of Community Services, Karen Iveson – Executive Director (s151), Rose Norris – Executive Director and Palbinder Mann - Democratic Services Officer.
Press:	None

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- i) **To APPROVE the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 26 March 2013 and that they are signed by the Chair.**

51. CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair informed the Committee that the report from the Task and Finish Group looking at National Non Domestic Rates would be circulated to the Committee when ready and that there was a timetable proposed for consultation.

52. CALL IN

No items had been called in.

53. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Councillor Carl Les, Chair of the Police and Crime Panel, Councillor Mrs Ivey, Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel and Ray Busby, Support Officer to the Police and Crime Panel were present to provide a presentation about the work of the Panel.

The following key points were explained to the Committee:

- The Panel was a joint Committee of the nine local authorities in the North Yorkshire Police Area who scrutinised the actions and decisions of the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire.
- The Panel was comprised of ten Councillors with at least one from each of the nine local authorities along with two independent members co-opted by the Panel. The Chair for 2012/13 was Councillor Carl Les and the two Vice Chairs were Councillors Fiona Fitzpatrick and Gillian Ivey. It was explained that the Panel met in public and that the Chair and Vice Chairs would rotate on a yearly basis.
- The Committee were also informed that the Panel had to be politically balanced with their being provision for additional co-options if necessary.
- The Panel's responsibilities included reviewing the Commissioner's Draft Police and Crime Plan, Draft Precept and Annual Report. The Panel were entitled to make recommendations to the Commissioner who then had to consider them and publish a response.
- The Panel also held confirmation hearings for the Commissioner's proposed Chief Constable, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and any Deputy Commissioner. Additionally, it was explained that the Panel had a power of veto, by two-thirds majority over the Commissioner's first Draft Precept and first candidate for Chief Constable.

It was queried how the Panel was funded. Mr Busby explained that funding was provided through a grant from the Home Office of around £53,000 which was spent mainly on staffing costs. Councillor Mrs Ivey explained that it had been made clear to the Panel that they had to work within their budget. It was also stated that the mileage for Panel members was paid through their individual Councils with the only exception being expenses for community representatives on the Panel. The Committee were informed that there was only a special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Panel and Vice Chairs and not the other Panel members.

Mr Busby explained that the Panel published key messages and it was important that the Scrutiny Committee received these messages. It was suggested that any messages published could be passed onto the Democratic Services Officer who could then circulate these to the Committee.

Mr Busby explained that there was an important relationship between the Scrutiny Committee and the Panel as the Committee would have local knowledge of crime and community safety issues at a local level which would be useful to the Panel.

A query was raised with regard to how the Panel engaged with the public. Mr Busby explained that information was made available through the press however as the Panel concentrated on more focused work then more people could be invited for these meetings.

A query was raised concerning why a booklet had not been produced this year explaining how the precept figure had been arrived at. It was explained this may have been missed however this would be raised with the Commissioner's office.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive and note the report.**

55. ACCESS SELBY 3RD INTERIM KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR PROGRESS REPORT: APRIL 2012 TO DECEMBER 2012 AND SLA DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Mrs G Ivey, Deputy Leader of the Council and Keith Dawson, Director of Community Services presented the report which provided details of Access Selby key performance indicators following the third quarter of reporting for the financial year 2012/13

The Committee were informed that the data was for this quarter was reported up to September 2012. There was currently one amber indicator relating to Council Tax recovery and one red indicator relating to processing benefit claims. The Committee were informed that a recovery plan had been implemented for this.

Concern was raised with regard to the waiting times at the customer contact centre and on the phone to customer services. It was noted that an item on customer services had been brought forward on the work programme to discuss this issue.

Councillor Dyson left the meeting at this point.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive and note the report.**

54. HEALTH SERVICE PROVISION – YORKSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE

Helen Hugill, Service and Quality Improvement Manager, Yorkshire Ambulance Service presented the report which provided an overview of services provided by Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

Ms Hugill explained that there had been a 5% over demand with regard to calls received with 71.54% red calls indicating the most serious being in North Yorkshire and 76.4% red calls being in York and Selby. The Committee were informed that North Yorkshire had been commissioned to achieve 71.2% and not the 75% national standard.

It was explained that there were three stations, York, Haxby and Selby with there also being two call centres, one in York and another in Wakefield. Ms Hugill explained that should there be an over demand, calls flowed between the two centres. The Committee were also informed that Selby had two 24 hour ambulances.

A query was raised around the difference between the R1 and R2 indicators. Ms Hugill explained that when a call came in, they were categorised depending on the severity and R1 was the most serious.

A query was raised concerning the availability of ambulance vehicles. Ms Hugill stated that there was a finite number of vehicles on the road and if an ambulance left the area, another vehicle could be pulled in from surrounding areas. The Committee were informed that discussions were taking place with Clinical Commissioning Groups about attendance responses and whether in non emergencies, patients could be taken to the Doctor instead of the hospital.

In response to a query concerning the cost of one callout, Ms Hugill explained that the cost per callout was around £285. The Committee were informed that a new pathway had been launched where the Passenger Transport Service could collect patients and this would cost less.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive and note the report.**

55. COMMUNITIES SELBY SERVICE PROVISION

The Executive Director presented the report which outlined progress made since the Communities Selby project was set up in 2011 and invited proposals from the Scrutiny Committee on how the various new support arrangements could be reviewed.

The Executive Director explained that the Council had decided against setting up a Third Sector Organisation (TSO) to deliver community engagement and

had decided to consider the different options available for it to deliver the Communities Selby concept. The Committee were informed that a successful pilot of a new Employer Sponsored Volunteering (ESV) scheme had been undertaken and there were new arrangements in place for administering the Community Engagement Forums (CEFs) with four of them now being supported by Selby AVS.

The Executive Director outlined other projects that had been supported by Communities Selby including the Olympic Torch Relay and bringing in new arrangements for the Countryside Management and third sector management of the area's nature reserves. It was explained that the team had now been disbanded however there was still an aim to commission and oversee outcomes and services and the relevant Executive Member along with the Executive Director were looking at ways in which this could be done.

Concerns were raised with regard to the current administration with the CEFs and it was stated that there were mistakes such as the wrong agenda being sent out along with irrelevant information. Members felt that the Tadcaster CEF which was administered by an independent person was more efficiently run and best practice could be shared to improve the other CEFs.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive and note the report.**

57. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

The Committee considered the Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 which provided an update of the work done by the Scrutiny Committee in the past year.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive and note the annual report submitted by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.**

The meeting closed at 5:47pm

Scrutiny Committee

- Venue: Committee Room
- Date: 7 May 2013
- Present: Councillors W Nichols (Chair), R Price (Vice Chair), I Chilvers, M Dyson, M Hobson, D Mackay, C Pearson, and D Peart.
- Apologies for Absence: Councillors R Sweeting.
- Officers Present: Ralph Gill – Lead Officer, Revenues and Benefits, Karen Iveson – Executive Director (s151), Eileen Scothern – Business Manager, Michelle Dinsdale – Assistant Policy Officer and Palbinder Mann - Democratic Services Officer.
- Press: None

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

59. CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair reminded the Committee of the second Scrutiny workshop which would be taking place on the Committee's provisional meeting date of Tuesday 21 May 2013.

60. CALL IN

No items had been called in.

61. SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW OF NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF

Councillor Pearson, Chair of the Task and Finish group provided a presentation on the work completed by the group in their review of National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Reliefs.

The Committee were informed that the group was comprised of Councillors Pearson, Chilvers and Hobson and met on three occasions between November 2012 and April 2012. The aims of the group were to review the existing policy for awarding relief and exploring options under the Council's general power to award relief.

Councillor Pearson explained that the outcomes of the review were the following:

- A defined policy for Discretionary Rate Relief
- A revised and effective process for awarding rate relief which:
 - was easy for applicants to understand and apply for
 - was easy for the authority to administer
 - enabled the Council to plan its budget.

It was explained that the group focused on the following two areas:

- Reviewing the current policy for awarding discretionary relief.
- Exploring options under the Council's general power to award discretionary rate relief.

Councillor Pearson explained the different groups which were awarded existing rate relief and the possible options for change in providing existing relief.

The Committee were informed that the Localism Act had given local authorities the power to grant discretionary relief in any circumstances however was subject to the condition that the Council may only grant relief if it was reasonable to do so, having regard to the interests of council tax payers in its area. It was explained that any new general relief granted would be at 100% cost to the Council.

Councillor Pearson explained that through supporting business who created new employment opportunities for local residents, the Council could entice new businesses to the area and encourage the expansion of existing businesses.

A query was raised on how the decision to award existing relief was currently decided. It was explained that current decision was made by the Executive Director (s151) in discussion with the Leader of the Council. The Committee discussed how decisions would be made on the new general relief and felt that a cross party panel should be formed to make the decisions.

The Executive Director (s151) clarified an error in the report as there was a suggestion that the cost of existing relief was overspent however the Council share was within budget. In response to a query, it was explained that £42,240 was set aside to cover the Council's cost of existing relief. The Lead Officer, Revenues and Benefits explained that the way the Government was portioning business rates was changing as the cost to the Council of existing relief would now be 40% across all groups.

It was agreed that the Chair of the Task Group and the Chair of the Scrutiny would attend the Executive meeting on 6 June 2013 to present the Committee's findings.

RESOLVED:

- i) A cross party panel for consideration of applications for the new general relief;**
- ii) The introduction of a cap on the budget set aside to support the new general relief;**
- iii) The introduction of a cap for individual awards in respect of new relief;**
- iv) To approve the draft National Non - Domestic Rates (NDR) Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which includes the following key changes:**
 - i. The implementation of a monetary cap on the level awarded per property per annum on all existing types of relief*
 - ii. The continuation to 'top up' 80% mandatory relief to 100%, for charitable bodies, on a sliding scale, but only where the organisation can evidence investment in the local community. All other awards in respect of charitable bodies to be capped at 80%, in line with non profit making organisations.*
 - iii. The introduction of an end date for all awards granted (allowing recipients to reapply).*
 - iv. The introduction of a cut off date for the submission of all applications, except those in respect of general rate relief and hardship.*
 - v. The granting of awards against the available budget.*
 - vi. The introduction of a general rate relief, linked to attracting new organisations to the District, encouraging expansion and creating employment opportunities for Selby District residents.*

The meeting closed at 5:40pm



Report Reference Number: SC/13/1

Agenda Item No: 7

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 2 July 2013

Author: Palbinder Mann, Democratic Services Officer

Lead Officer: Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151)

Title: New Selby War Memorial Hospital: Minor Injuries Unit (Covering Report)

Summary:

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the New Selby War Memorial Hospital at their meeting on 25 September 2012 and requested a further update at a future meeting. Representatives from the NHS will be in attendance to provide information and answer questions from the Committee.

Recommendations:

The Scrutiny Committee are asked provide its comments and questions to scrutinise services at the Hospital.

Reasons for recommendation

The Committee is asked to ensure that efficient and adequate services are being provided by the Unit for patients.

1. Introduction and background

Representatives from the NHS attended the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 25 September 2012 to discuss the commissioning of services at the hospital along with the hospital's performance.

2. The Report

The main report is attached at Appendix A and outlines the current activity undertaken at the hospital along with providing the Committee with an update on urgent care developments within the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group.

3. Legal/Financial Controls and other Policy matters

3.1 Legal Issues

N/A

3.2 Financial Issues

N/A

4. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to ensure that efficient and adequate services are being provided by the Minor Injuries Unit for patients.

5. Background Documents

N/A

6. Appendices

Main Report – Appendix A

Contact Officer:

Palbinder Mann
Democratic Services Officer
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pmann@selby.gov.uk

Selby District Council: Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Meeting Date	2 July 2013
Report Authors	Jo Evans – Manager of The New Selby War Memorial Hospital, Minor Injury Unit Elizabeth Eagin – Urgent Care Practitioner Gill Brickwood – Urgent Care Programme Lead. Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group
Title of Paper	The New Selby War Memorial Hospital: Minor Injuries Unit
<p>The objectives of this paper is to inform Selby District Council: Overview and Scrutiny Committee on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current activity undertaken within The New Selby War Memorial Hospital, Minor Injury Unit • A current update on urgent care developments within the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group 	

Introduction

Harrogate and District Hospital Foundation Trust manage The New Selby War Memorial Hospital: Minor Injuries Unit. The service is commissioned by Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group.

Service Model

The minor injuries unit provides care to people with minor illness and traumas. It is staffed by urgent care nurse practitioners, who are specially trained to provide high quality care to people with immediate minor injury health care needs. A number of the nursing staff are also nurse prescribers. The unit is co-located with the Out of Hours Service.

Opening Times are from 07.30 to 21.00, 7 days a week including bank holidays. An X-ray service is available from 08.30 to 16.45, Monday to Friday. The OOHs is available from 18.30 to 08.00.

The majority of patients are treated within the Unit. A small number of patients are transferred to Hull, York, Pontefract or Pinderfields.

Current Activity

Total number of patients seen for 2012/13 is 15324. This is a reduction from the 2011/12 activity (16323) by 1000 patients. Appendix 1 provides a further details on activity over the 2012/13 period.

Examples of conditions treated are listed below:

- sprains and strains
- broken bones
- wound infections
- minor burns and scalds
- minor head injuries
- insect and animal bites
- minor eye injuries
- injuries to the back, shoulder and chest

Commissioning Minor Injuries

Commissioning of minor injuries comes within the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group Urgent Care Programme.

The urgent care programme is aimed at developing a whole system integrated approach to urgent care so that the patient journey is as smooth as possible, treatment is given as local to home as clinically possible, its timely and high quality.

As part the process to achieve this Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group has established an Urgent Care Board with representation from providers of services, local authority, patients, police, ambulance and commissioners. The first formal meeting takes place on the 20 June.

The purpose of the Board will be to support and advise on the design of urgent care for our future population, using best practice information and to oversee current action and delivery plans.

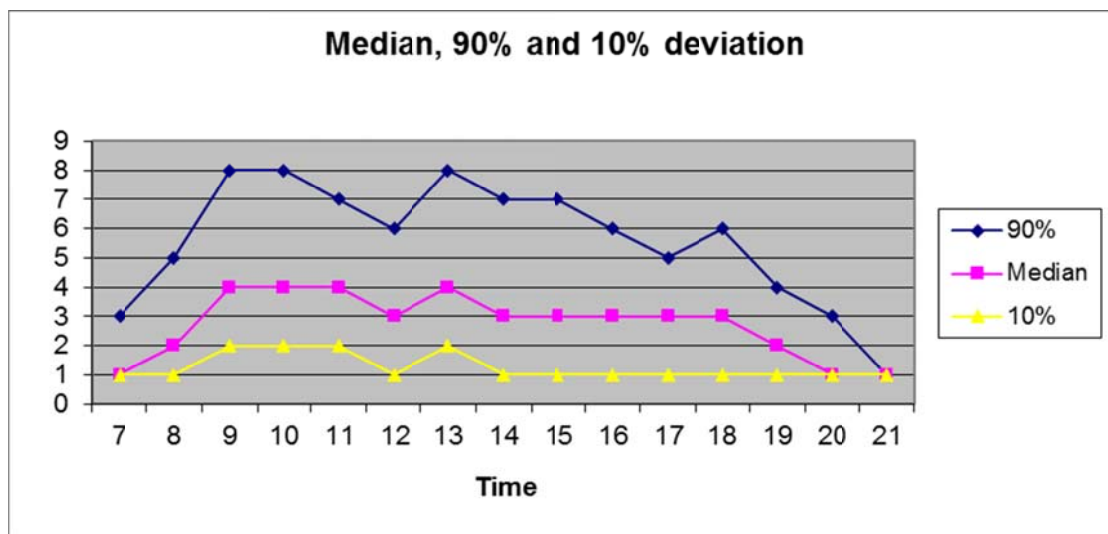
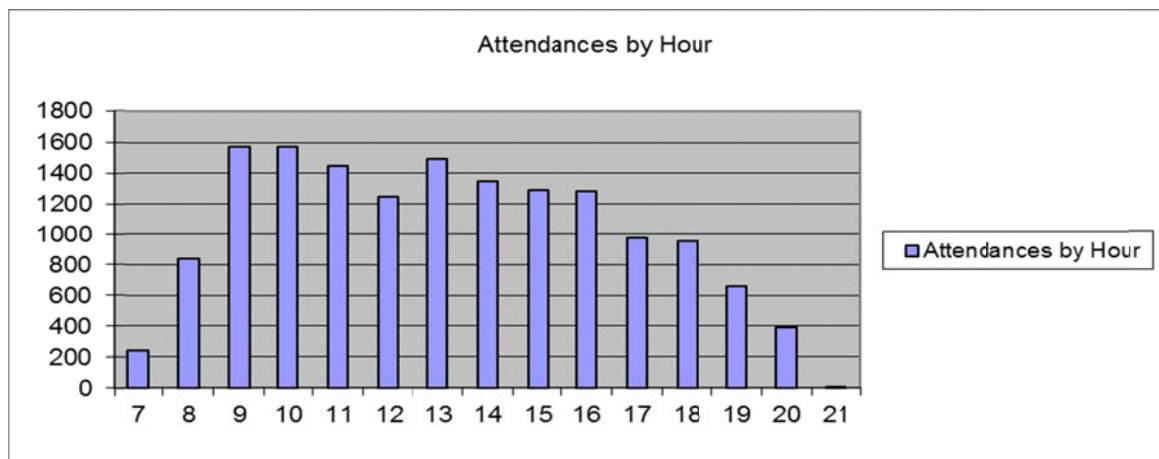
Within the urgent care programme there are also a number of projects and workstreams to reduce A&E attendances and admissions to hospital where clinically appropriate. These include review of care pathways, working with care homes and review of Out of Hours Service.

Total Attendances. Period 2012/13

Attendances by time of day over a year, weekday and weekend.

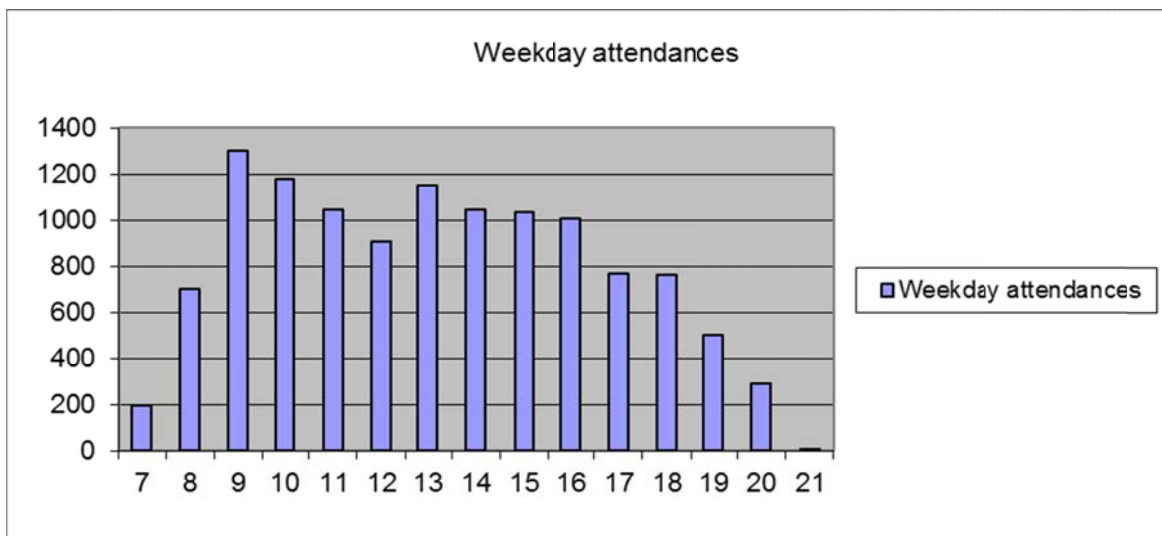
Time of Day	Number of attendances	90%	Median	10%
7	243	3	1	1
8	840	5	2	1
9	1575	8	4	2
10	1575	8	4	2
11	1447	7	4	2
12	1244	6	3	1
13	1494	8	4	2
14	1345	7	3	1
15	1289	7	3	1
16	1276	6	3	1
17	975	5	3	1
18	960	6	3	1
19	663	4	2	1
20	392	3	1	1
21	6	1	1	1

15324 Total in Yr



Weekday attendance over a year. Period 2012/13

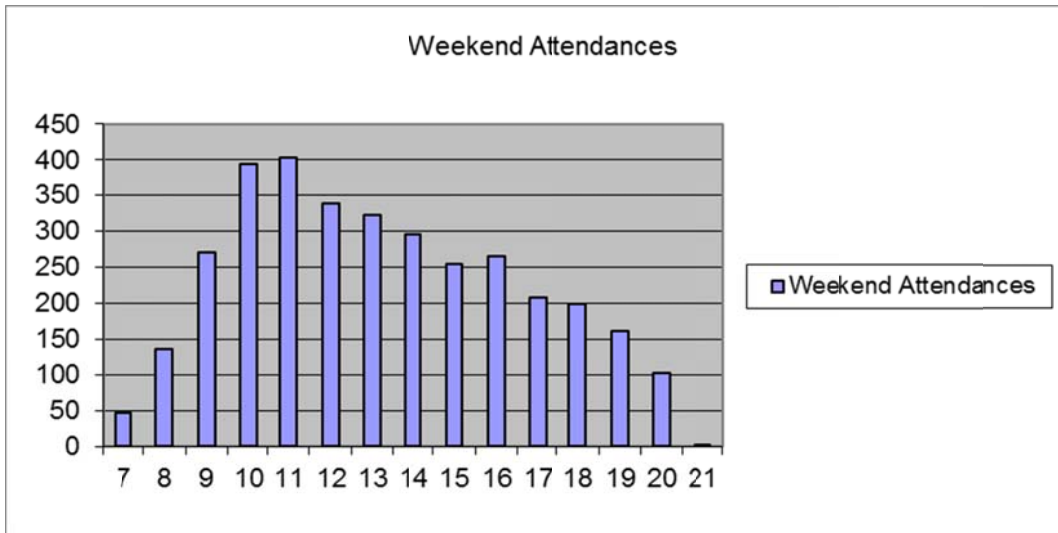
Attendances by time of day over a year Weekdays		
Time of Day	Number of Attendances	
7		195
8		704
9		1305
10		1180
11		1044
12		906
13		1151
14		1049
15		1035
16		1010
17		766
18		760
19		501
20		289
21		5
Total Attendances		11900



Weekend attendances over a year. Period 2012/13

Attendances by time of day over a year Weekends

Time of day	Number of attendances
7	48
8	136
9	270
10	395
11	403
12	338
13	323
14	296
15	254
16	266
17	209
18	200
19	162
20	103
21	1
Total	3404





Report Reference Number: SC/13/2

Agenda Item No: 8

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 2nd July 2013
Author: Sarah Thompson, Acting Lead Officer – Community Support
Lead Officer: Sarah Thompson

Title: Access Selby Service Provision – Customer Contact Centre

Summary: As part of Scrutiny Committee's review of Access Selby Service Provision it has been agreed that the Customer Services (Contact Centre) service should be considered at the 2nd July 2013 meeting.

Recommendation:

Councillors scrutinise the provision of services within the Customer Services (Contact Centre) service.

Reason for recommendation

The Committee ensures the contribution of Scrutiny is effective in supporting service improvement and delivery against district wide and Council priorities.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 The Customer Contact Centre provides the front facing first contact for the majority of customers who wish to access district council services. The service is split between face to face contact on the ground floor and a call centre facility on the first floor.

1.2 The Customer Contact Centre opening hours are as follows;

Face to Face: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9.30am – 4.00pm
Wednesday 10.00am – 4.00pm.

Call Centre: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, 8.30am – 5.00pm
Wednesday 10.00am – 5.00pm.
Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm.

1.3 The Contact Centre receives calls and visits relating to all council services. The main services covered are local taxation, housing management, benefits, revenues, environmental health, council house repairs and planning.

- 1.4 There are 18 FTE Customer Service Advisors at the Contact Centre. The CSA's are split between Face to Face and Call Centre duties on a rota basis. Flexible systems of working allows for quick movement between both services where demand dictates. The centre is managed by the Lead Officer - Community Support and a dedicated Supervisor.

2. The Report

- 2.1 The service aims to meet the following performance targets;

Average waiting time before customer phone call is answered (Phone).

The Call Centre answered 106,356 telephone calls in 2012/13. The target average waiting time is 2 minutes. The average wait time during 2012/13 was 1 minute 41 seconds (this compares to an average wait time of 1 minute 13 seconds in 2011/12).

Average waiting time before customer seen by advisor (Face to Face).

The Contact Centre advisors saw 24,485 customers in 2012/13. The target average waiting time is 10 minutes. The average wait time during 2012/13 was 14 minutes 20 seconds (this compares to an average wait time of 11 minute 40 seconds in 2011/12).

- 2.2 We believe there are a number of reasons for the increase in wait times during 2012/13. These include
- An increase in more complex calls being received about council tax and welfare reform issues.
 - Reduced staffing numbers during the first 3 quarters of 2012/13.
 - A number of failures in the council's auto payment systems resulting in longer manual handling of such enquiries.
- 2.3 Since the last report to Scrutiny Committee the Contact Centre has undergone a staffing review based around service demand data. Following this review we appointed 3 part-time staff to peak demand times. This brought the team back up to near its full strength of 18 FTE split between 23 staff members (9 full time/14 part time).
- 2.4 In addition to the staffing improvements we have instigated a number of other initiatives aimed at building sustainable service delivery improvements. These include:
1. An auto-attendant phone system will shortly be introduced which will allow greater flexibility in call handling at high demand times.
 2. Flexible opening hours operated during the lead up to the Welfare Reform changes that resulted in Saturday opening to allow greater opportunity for customer engagement on a specific high profile issue. We would expect to repeat this flexible approach for similar issues in the future.

3. A full review of the campaigns (service area scripts) has commenced. This review aims to ensure the information available to the CSA team is both up to date and relevant, ensuring a right first time approach to service delivery. This work also provides an important data cleansing exercise in readiness for the introduction of a new CRM.
4. Issues around IT provision are included within the ICT service needs project. These include an upgrade to the bandwidth between the Civic Centre and the Contact Centre and also a review of the current automated payment line service to provide improved consistency and increased capacity for on-line payments.
5. A project to make better use of key skills across the organisation has commenced. This will aim to create capacity within Access Selby to divert staff to service areas (including Customer Services) at times of high demand. The project will also extend to capacity planning within our recruitment process aimed at encouraging further development to our flexible and generic approach to staffing.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Customer Contact Centre provides the front facing first contact for the majority of customers who wish to access district council services. It is vital therefore that performance matches the expectations of our customers.
- 3.2 Customer wait times currently average 1 minute 34 Seconds for phone calls and 14 minutes for face to face contacts.
- 3.3 We continue to invest in service improvement initiatives to ensure sustainable improvement in all areas.

Contact Officer

Sarah Thompson
Acting Lead Officer – Community Support
sthompson@selby.gov.uk



Report Reference Number SC/13/3

Agenda Item No: 9

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 2nd July 2013
Author: Chris Smith
Lead Officer: Benefits & Revenues

Title: The work of the Benefits & Local Taxation Service detailing activity performance.

Summary

The Benefits Service administers the government's welfare benefits schemes, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit on behalf of the Secretary of State for Works and Pensions. These are means tested benefits, which help people on low incomes to pay their Rent and/or Council Tax

The Local Taxation Service administers the billing and collection of both Council Tax and Business Rates in respect of domestic and non domestic premises.

Recommendations

To consider the information contained in the report.

Reasons for recommendation

To provide a breakdown of the work undertaken by the Benefits & Local Taxation Services detailing the workload and performance.

1.0 Introduction and background

The service area is responsible for the administration of Housing and Council Tax benefit plus the administration of the Council Tax and Business Rates billing functions.

The overall functions of the Benefits & Local Taxation service include:

- Processing, administering and paying benefit entitlements
- Processing, administering and collecting Council Tax on behalf of all Precepting Authorities (including the County

Council; the Police and Fire Authorities; Town and Parish Councils; as well as the District itself; in respect of domestic properties throughout the District

- Processing, administering and collecting Business Rates in respect of non domestic properties throughout the District

2. The Report

The Benefits & Local Taxation service has always operated in an ever-changing environment with regards to legislation and government policy and shifts in customer demand which result from the economic downturn.

Demand in respect of benefit new claims and changes was 40,910 in 2011/12 (a 30% increase on the previous year) and increased to 43,563 in 2012/13 (a further 6.5% increase on the previous year).

Within the Benefits service we have 2 reported performance measures:

- SLA018 – The percentage of new benefits claims and changes processed within 5 days of the receipt of complete application. Target 90%.
- SLA019 – The Council Tax Collection Rate. Target 97.9%.

In 2012/2013 Performance indicator SLA019 was 97.88% against a target of 97.90% with robust debt recovery ongoing.

SLA018 has been subject to a recovery plan directing additional resources to this area of the business in the context of national welfare reform and increased demand. Performance for 2012/13 was 88.72% which exceeds the outturn of 88.59% in 2011/12.

Despite the increase in new claims and benefit changes experienced throughout 2012-2013 the performance outturn demonstrates improved performance since the performance indicator was introduced in 2011-2012.

The current year to date performance on SLA018 stands at 88.00% and is on track to achieve the target following the first quarter of reporting.

Performance on SLA019 has been profiled throughout the year to ensure that the collection rate achieves the set target in March 2014.

3. Legal/Financial Controls and other Policy matters

The service operates within the Access Selby cost envelope and specification of the service level agreement (Access Selby and Selby District Council)

4. Conclusion

The Benefits & Local Taxation service has continued to perform well in difficult circumstances by concentrating resources where they are needed most. This is still a relatively new combined service operating all aspects of Revenues and Benefits through generic assessment.

5. Background Documents

None.

Contact Officer: Chris Smith

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 2 July 2013
Author: Palbinder Mann, Democratic Services Officer
Lead Officer: Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151)

Title: National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Task and Finish Group

Summary: The report provides a summary of the Task and Finish Group's review National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and outcomes.

Recommendation:

To note the work done by the Task and Finish Group and to suggest any improvements on the Task and Finish Group Review process.

Reasons for recommendation

The Committee ensures the contribution of Scrutiny is effective in supporting service improvement and delivery against district wide and Council priorities.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Committee has held developmental workshops in response to the report written by Councillor Metcalfe on Scrutiny which was considered and endorsed by Council. The use of task and finish groups to facilitate more in-depth scrutiny in appropriate circumstances was one of the actions arising from this work.
- 1.2 A Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group consisting of Councillors C Pearson (Chair), I Chilvers and M Hobson was set up to review discretionary rate relief for non-domestic rates.
- 1.3 The proposed outcomes of the review were:
- Ascertain if the existing polic(ies) were fit for purpose
 - A defined policy for Discretionary Rate Relief
 - A revised and effective process for awarding rate relief which:

- is easy for applicants to understand and apply for
- is easy for the authority to administer
- enables the Council to plan its budget

The group focused on two areas:

1. Reviewing the current policy for awarding discretionary relief
2. Exploring options under the Council's general power to award discretionary rate relief.

2. The Report

- 2.1** The Scrutiny Committee has held developmental workshops in response to the report written by Councillor Metcalfe on Scrutiny which was considered and endorsed by Council.
- 2.2** As part of the development process, the Committee has suggested ideas around conducting reviews by a Task and Finish Group to look at a particular area in more depth and through an informal process.
- 2.3** The Committee decided to run a pilot review looking into National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to gather experience of the process.
- 2.4** The Task and Finish Group made up of Councillors Chilvers, Hobson and Pearson met on three occasions and were supported in the review by officers. The meetings took place in an informal setting which allowed flexibility due to the non use of Committee rules.
- 2.5** The Group made a series of recommendations at the end of the process which were then considered by the Scrutiny Committee following which they were referred to the Executive for consideration. These are attached an Appendix A.
- 2.6** The topic chosen allowed the group to feed into the consultation process for National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) - Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which allowed the group to actively influence decision making policy. With the last policy being reviewed 10 years ago, the formulation of a new policy was important and therefore the Task Group were presented with an opportunity to make a difference and be involved in influencing decision making.
- 2.7** The Executive considered the proposals at their meeting on 6 June 2013 and endorsed the majority of the recommendations and where any recommendations were altered by the Executive this was fed back to all Members of the Scrutiny Committee. The minute extract from the Executive meeting is attached at Appendix B. Overall, the approach is considered to be a success and it is proposed that the use of Task and Finish Groups becomes an on-going feature of the scrutiny process.

2.8 In summarising the process and considering improvements, the Committee may want to give thought to the following areas when conducting future task and finish reviews:

- Number of meetings in the review
- Length of the review.
- Number of Members in the group with consideration given to involving non Executive Members of the Council not on the Scrutiny Committee
- Involvement of external partners and members of the public
- Members of the group taking on a more leading role in the review with regard to direction and agenda setting.
- Consulting external partners and accepting evidence from them if necessary.

2.9 The Committee is also asked to discuss potential topics for its next review.

3. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to present its views on the Task and Finish Group process.

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Appendices:

Recommendations by Scrutiny Committee – Appendix A

Executive Meeting, 6 June 2013, Minute Extract – Appendix B

- i) A cross party panel for consideration of applications for the new general relief;**
- ii) The introduction of a cap on the budget set aside to support the new general relief;**
- iii) The introduction of a cap for individual awards in respect of new relief;**
- iv) To approve the draft National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which includes the following key changes:**
 - i. The implementation of a monetary cap on the level awarded per property per annum on all existing types of relief*
 - ii. The continuation to 'top up' 80% mandatory relief to 100%, for charitable bodies, on a sliding scale, but only where the organisation can evidence investment in the local community. All other awards in respect of charitable bodies to be capped at 80%, in line with non profit making organisations.*
 - iii. The introduction of an end date for all awards granted (allowing recipients to reapply).*
 - iv. The introduction of a cut off date for the submission of all applications, except those in respect of general rate relief and hardship.*
 - v. The granting of awards against the available budget.*
 - vi. The introduction of a general rate relief, linked to attracting new organisations to the District, encouraging expansion and creating employment opportunities for Selby District residents.*

8. National Non – Domestic Rates (NNDR) – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

Councillor Lunn presented the report which outlined the findings from the review of the Council's current NNDR policy undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Lunn set out the proposed changes to the Council's NNDR policy. The new General NNDR Policy aimed to provide flexible criteria to allow each application to be considered on its own merits but with a clear objective that any relief award must be able to demonstrate that it is in the interests of local tax payers.

As Chair of the Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Councillor Pearson responded to questions from the Executive on the work the group had undertaken.

The Executive approved amendments to the recommendations regarding Existing Relief for Charitable Bodies and the process for considering new applications for General Relief.

The Executive Director S151 informed the Executive of the intention to earmark funding of £300k to cover the granting of relief from the surplus in the Council's accounts from 2012/13.

Resolved:

- i. To approve the draft National Non - Domestic Rates (NNDR) Discretionary Rate Relief Policy including the following key changes;**
 - The implementation of a monetary cap on the level awarded per property per annum on all existing types of relief.**
 - Award 20% relief to charitable bodies, but only where there is significant evidence that the charitable activities provide a significant benefit to local residents.**
 - The introduction of an end date for all awards granted (allowing recipients to reapply).**
 - The introduction of a cut off date for the submission of all applications except those in respect of general rate relief and hardship.**
 - The granting of awards against the available budget.**

- **The introduction of a general rate relief, linked to attracting new organisations to the District, encouraging expansion and creating employment opportunities for Selby District Residents.**
- ii. **To agree that the Executive considers applications for the new general relief.**
- iii. **To approve the introduction of a cap on the budget set aside to support the new general relief - initially at £300k subject to sufficient surpluses in 2012/13.**
- iv. **To approve the introduction of a cap for individual awards in respect of new general relief.**

Reason for the decision:

- i. To put in place a robust policy framework to ensure that decisions regarding the award of discretionary rate relief are taken in a fair, consistent and transparent manner giving due consideration to the interests of local tax payers.
- ii. To safeguard the interests of the local tax payer by ensuring that funds that are allocated for the award of relief are used in the most effective and economic way.
- iii. To promote growth and retention in the District, in particular employment opportunities for District residents.
- iv. To generate contingencies to allow for a future increase in applications, including future proofing the policy to avoid potentially costly awards.