

# ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

26 MARCH 2019

7:30 pm – 9:20 pm

Councillors Jon Tolley (Chair), Liz Green (Vice-Chair), Olivia Boulton, Kevin Davis\*, Lorraine Dunstone, Mark Durrant, Ian George, Dennis Goodship, Caroline Kerr, Katrina Lidbetter and John Sweeney

\* Absent

### 30. Public Questions

There were no questions from members of the public.

### 31. Apologies for Absence and Attendance of Substitute Members

Apologies were received from Councillor Kevin Davis.

### 32. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jon Tolley declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the item concerning the Kingston BID Ballot due to his business being located within the BID area and therefore left the room during the debate on the matter and did not vote thereon.

### 33. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### 34. Customer Service Improvement Plan and Customer Access Strategy

The Committee received an update on progress with implementation of the previously approved Customer Access and Digital Strategies.

Members recalled that the Strategies were designed to improve responsiveness through digital transformation, increased online self-service and the redesign of services to ensure that enquiries were resolved with communication of clear outcomes. The strategies did not set a one size fits all approach and emphasised the importance of retaining choice and flexibility in contacting the Council and delivering a consistent service through face to face, phone, website and social media channels. The Council was developing its approach to learning from complaints and feedback through providing training on restorative practice and focusing on early resolution of concerns. New corporate and social care complaints procedures had been adopted and positive feedback received from the Ombudsman regarding the Council's proactive approach in response to complaints received in the previous year.

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The Committee noted details of progress with a number of initiatives including the redesign of the website to improve the quality of online information and make it easier for residents to find what they were looking for, and a digital inclusion project designed to map digital inclusion activities and to enhance and improve outcomes and access for residents. Projects were also underway to improve responsiveness to Councillor casework, redesign services taking a 'digital first' approach and the delivery of a new digital platform intended to enable customers to report, pay, book and apply for services online with a consistent experience, improve the support to customers in person or over the phone and reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Members welcomed the progress to date, noting significant reductions in call waiting times as customer service staff worked more flexibly across different areas to enable better management of demand. Staff cohesion and morale were high and the team possessed a genuine commitment to improvement.

The importance of working with communities to co-design services was also recognised and Member participation in the co-design workshops strongly encouraged. In terms of accessibility some of the fundamental technical barriers had now been overcome and the Council's website had, for the first time, passed industry standard accessibility compliance tests. Officers were working with groups representing residents with disabilities to test and further improve systems.

**RESOLVED** that –

- 1) work to improve the Council's responsiveness to the community through the implementation of the Customer Access Strategy be endorsed, including:
  - improving the Council's website [www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk) through co- design with residents, businesses, partners, Members and colleagues.
  - redesigning services end to end to ensure to improve responsiveness through all channels including face to face, phone, website and through social media including Contact Kingston.
  - focusing on performance to ensure we deliver a consistent service to the community we serve.
- 2) A further progress report be presented to the Committee in six months, prior to implementation of the new website.

Voting - Unanimous

### **35. Statement of Community Involvement**

The Committee gave consideration to the launch of a public consultation on a revised draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Members noted that the SCI set out how the Council would involve residents and other interested parties in planning matters, including planning applications and the development of planning policy and guidance. The document, which updated both the existing SCI adopted in 2007 and a previous draft consulted upon in 2016, addressed how the Council would meet the statutory requirements for community

engagement. It provided a flexible and lasting framework for delivering high quality engagement. Consultation on the revised document would take place in advance of public consultation on the early Engagement for the new Local Plan.

**RESOLVED** that –

1. Authority be granted for a public consultation for a period of four weeks on the revised draft Statement of Community Involvement at Annex 1 to the agenda; and
2. Prior to consultation, the Assistant Director of Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Resident Engagement, Planning Policy & Culture and Heritage and the Chair of the Development Control Committee and the relevant Opposition spokespeople, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

Voting – Unanimous

**36. Kingston BID 4 - Ballot**

*(Councillor Liz Green in the Chair)*

The Committee gave consideration to approval of the ballot process for the establishment of the latest Kingston Business Improvement District (BID). In so doing it also heard from Kirsten Henly, the Chief Executive of Kingston First, the operator of the BID.

The purpose of BIDs was to enable the funding of beneficial projects and activities through a levy imposed on the non-domestic ratepayers within the BID area. The current BID, the third, was due to run to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 and Kingston First had now formally notified the Council of their wish to start the process for the establishment of a fourth BID, to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. It was proposed that the statutory ballot of ratepayers required to approve the arrangements would be held in May and June 2019.

Members noted that Kingston First was a key partner in the development and delivery of the economic and growth priorities for the town centre. It delivered a range of town centre focused services under contract to the Council and provided a strategic partnership framework which enabled the Council to engage effectively with a wide range of commercial interests. Recent achievements of the BID included free skills workshops and training, the 'Keep it Kingston' Card, development of the Christmas market and other events and employment of a team of town rangers to maintain the streetscape and respond to support local businesses and visitors.

In recent months the BID had been working with the Council on re-imagining the town centre and emerging visioning work as well as supporting a number of initiatives around digital connectivity, including free public WiFi, small cells and the Internet of Things (IoT). It was expected that the BID would play an important role in facilitating businesses' engagement in the development of strategic sites within the

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town centre. Four key themes formed the pillars of Kingston First's new business plan, namely

- Quality Streets and Spaces/Enhancing Experiences
- Attracting and promoting
- Supporting and Informing
- Representing and Influencing

The Committee noted that the cessation of the BID would cause the loss of the additional day to day services provided to residents, visitors and businesses in the BID area and also see the end of the strategic voice and single point of contact representing the interests of the businesses in the town centre. It was therefore agreed that the Council, as a full BID member and rate payer itself should vote in favour of the establishment of the fourth BID in the ballot subject to the detail in the final offer from Kingston First being satisfactory.

**RESOLVED** that –

1. The Kingston First (BID 4) ballot process commence and the Returning Officer appoint the Electoral Reform Services to make ballot arrangements; and
2. The Director of Growth, in consultation with the Leader and relevant opposition spokesperson, be given delegated authority to vote 'yes' in the Kingston First (BID 4) ballot process subject to the ballot offer being satisfactory.

Voting – Unanimous (Councillor Tolley did not participate in the vote due to his Disclosable Pecuniary Interest)

**37. Urgent Items Authorised by the Chair**

There were no urgent items.

Signed.....Date.....

Chair