

OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

10 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor K Crout (Chair)
Councillor S Counter (Vice-Chair)
Councillors K Collett, J Dhindsa, A Joynes, R Martins, S Silver,
S Williams and S Johnson

Also present:

Officers: Managing Director
Shared Director of Finance
Head of Community and Customer Services
Interim Housing Section Head
Partnerships and Performance Section Head
Corporate, Leisure and Community Client Section Head
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

None were received.

9 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2015 were submitted and signed.

11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

that, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the reasons stated in the report.

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ICT UPDATE

The Panel received a report by the Managing Director setting out the decision to terminate the Capita IT Outsourced Contract. The Managing Director then responded to Members' questions on his report.

RESOLVED –

1. that the report and recommendations be noted
2. that the Panel be kept informed of on-going developments.

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HOSTELS AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Head of Community and Customer Services introduced the new Interim Housing Section Head who provided an update report on the hostel management contract. The contract had been let to Watford Community Housing Trust (WCHT) in April 2013. It was a five year contract, with the ability to extend by a further two years.

Colour copies of Appendix A, showing the hostels and self contained properties performance matrix, were tabled by the Interim Housing Section Head. These highlighted the areas of concern more clearly. He commented that the contract with WCHT was proving successful. It was managed tightly with regular meetings between the housing team and representatives from WCHT.

WCHT had incurred penalties during the early part of the contract due to poor performance levels, however most targets were now being met. Councillor Johnson commented that the current progress of the contract was very satisfactory. WCHT had negotiated a keen contract price and renegotiations in 2018 could be difficult.

Councillor Williams questioned what impact the current refugee crisis would have on hostel provision. The Chair responded, commenting that this issue did not relate to the content of the report and therefore would not be considered at this meeting.

Looking at indicator 8.2, the number of repairs completed within 31 days expressed as a percentage, Councillor Counter queried the low score (84%) recorded in 2015/16 quarter 1. The Interim Housing Section Head clarified that this represented a single outstanding repair which had not been completed within the agreed timeframe.

Councillor Collett asked what provisions were in place in the contract to manage anti-social behaviour at York House. Some damage to property could be wilful. The Interim Housing Section Head commented that such incidents were taken up with WCHT and there were targets for resolving any occurrences. Anti-social behaviour had been discussed at the two weekly operational management meetings. Eviction was a possible outcome. Councillor Johnson added that he

had had a number of meetings with residents and was aware of their concerns in this area.

Councillor Martins questioned the repair record of WCHT, commenting that it was important that repairs should be undertaken both quickly and to a standard that maintained the hostel stock at the requisite level. Responding, Councillor Johnson acknowledged the early problems in the contract, but suggested that the current repair record was good.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and responding to Members' questions.

RESOLVED –

that the Panel note the report on the hostel management contract.

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PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 1 2015/16)

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head introduced the Performance Report for quarter 1 2015/16. She commented that quarter 1 provided the first point in the year for services to consider performance and address problems in order to ensure that service delivery remained on track for 2015/16.

She highlighted, in particular, the performance against target in household waste and recycling by Veolia (ES1 – ES5). In ES1 and ES2 this reflected a change in the definition for the indicator, which made meaningful comparisons with previous years difficult. In addition, in ES2, ES3, ES4 and ES5, targets had been affected by an exceptionally poor growing season in April – June, which had reduced green waste recycling and composting.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head further reported that consideration was being given to changing the permitted levels of household waste around Christmas.

Councillor Joynes queried the absence of figures for indicators ES9 and ES10. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head clarified that the figures for this year had been reported. However figures had not been provided by Veolia for the same quarter last year and, therefore, comparisons were not available.

Introducing the new Corporate, Leisure & Community Client Section Head, there followed a discussion about the SLM contract. The new Corporate, Leisure & Community Client Section Head had worked with SLM previously and had ideas about how to improve the reporting of information so that it was clear and consistent. This would increase confidence in the results presented.

It was planned to undertake a dilapidation survey of the two leisure centres over the next 12 months in readiness for the re-tendering process for the contracts, which were due to end in two years and nine months. The Corporate, Leisure & Community Client Section Head advised that other information could be gleaned

from a report on a SLM leisure centre in Plymouth. In addition, there was scope for regional comparisons with other councils in Hertfordshire.

Councillor Joynes raised concerns about the cancellation of classes and questioned whether this was due to staff being poorly remunerated. The Corporate, Leisure & Community Client Section Head stated that staff were properly paid for their services. Classes were required to be commercially viable and their provision was therefore responsive to demand.

In a further question, Councillor Joynes asked whether schools were involved in decisions about the provision of different activities. The Corporate, Leisure & Community Client Section Head confirmed that schools were involved, particularly through the schools partnership. Moreover, SLM was very aware of the importance of the quality of sports provision for young people.

The Chair had concerns about staffing levels in the gym, which he felt were at times too low. He had received complaints about people being in the gym with little or no supervision at the end of the day. Councillor Joynes questioned whether this raised some safety issues, where heavy and complex equipment was being used.

In response, the Corporate, Leisure & Community Client Section Head said that he would investigate staffing levels across the day against SLM's service level agreement and method statements.

Councillor Collett asked for an additional KPI to be considered to measure staff turnover levels at both leisure centres. She too was aware of the frustration experienced by leisure centre users when classes were cancelled, sometimes at very short notice, because key individuals were no longer employed at the centre.

Moving on to the HQ Theatres, the Panel noted that a new, more diverse, programme of events was being promoted. This reflected a change of management, which was also forging better links with Watford Palace Theatre.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and responding to the Panel's questions.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Panel note the performance report for quarter 1 2015/16
2. that the Panel's requests for additional information be noted.

ACTION: Partnerships and Performance Section Head

- to investigate staffing levels against SLM's service level agreement and method statements
- to add a new KPI to measure staff turnover levels at both leisure centres.

UPDATE ON ACTIONS

The Panel received an update on different actions which had arisen from the previous meeting.

Councillor Martins drew attention to the high levels of fly tipping and slow response times to remove items. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head reminded the Panel that flytipping was a criminal offence and flytips were recorded as “enviro crimes”. This required Environmental Health to gather evidence for possible prosecution, which could extend removal times.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head tabled a late paper on community hire charges at Watford Colosseum (PR41). Councillor Martins commented that, even with the reduced rates available to local groups, the charges remained high.

The Chair drew members’ attention to the considerable investment that had been made in the community centres in Holywell and Leavesden Green. These represented good value for money to users and their availability should be publicised more widely.

There was a brief discussion on Appendix 1 to the update on actions, which provided an explanatory note on the living wage. Councillor Williams underlined the importance of promoting rates of remuneration that provided people with an income on which they could live.

Councillor Joynes suggested that renegotiations for the leisure centre contracts would provide an opportunity to promote a living wage rate, in line with stipulations included in the Veolia contract.

RESOLVED –

that the update on actions be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel reviewed the Work Programme and agreed a number of changes and suggestions. These were to:

1. remove consideration of the ICT Contract from the 19 October agenda
2. arrange a tour of the Colosseum on 19 October immediately prior to discussions on HQ Theatres
3. investigate the possibility of holding the meeting on 19 January – considering the SLM contract – at one of the leisure centres.

RESOLVED –

that the revised Work Programme be approved.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 9.05 pm