

OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

26 NOVEMBER 2015

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

Also present:

Officers: Partnerships and Performance Section Head
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (AG)

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None were received.

23 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2015 were submitted and signed.

25 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16 (QUARTER 2)

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head introduced the report explaining that Quarter Two was a good comparative period to check on performance. She invited questions whilst going through the various sections.

In response to a question from Councillor Joynes regarding item ES1 in the report and the change in definition; the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that the change was a national requirement which resulted in waste such as street sweeping being excluded. Consequently, comparisons with previous years would not be meaningful until a full year's data on the new definition was available. Quarterly comparisons for 2015/16 were, however, meaningful as the definition was now consistent. Councillor Dhindsa commented that this seemed to make sense.

With reference to item ES5 in the report, Councillor Dhindsa asked whether the Council had control over business recycling. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that the Council did not and that businesses sourced

their own recycling solutions (this would be a cost to them). There were a number of companies in the market offering this service. Councillor Dhindsa discussed issues around waste collection and recycling in relation to the prison service. As there were a number of Member questions about the waste and recycling service, the Chair asked when Veolia were next coming to a Panel meeting. The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer explained that they were not due to attend this municipal year. The Chair asked that they be invited as soon as possible in the next municipal year.

ACTION – Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer.

In response to a question from Councillor Joynes with reference to waste and recycling for houses under multiple occupation; the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that a range of solutions were looked at and gave an example of a recent initiative in Gladstone Road. She said that houses under multiple occupation could be a problem due to the throughput of people who lived there, which meant that education on waste and recycling was an ongoing activity in certain areas. Councillor Joynes asked a further question in relation to the number of bins that could be used; the Partnerships and Performance Section Head outlined the current process as she understood it and undertook to check on the issue and report back to the Panel.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head.

Councillor Williams asked whether recommendations could be made to Veolia about collections in the morning that were causing ongoing traffic problems. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that to some degree this was a difficult issue for Watford given the nature of the town; many roads were busy during the rush hour periods. But she was aware of problems in Whippendell Road on a Monday morning between 08.30 and 09.30. Members discussed a number of other perceived problem locations that were busy with traffic. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head undertook to investigate whether collections could be undertaken in quieter areas during the problem times or whether they could take place earlier in the morning.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

Councillor Silver explained that he had received a number of complaints in his ward about the marking of sports pitches and asked whether there had been other similar problems. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head discussed transitional arrangements when Veolia started the contract with the Council that had initially lead to a number of problems as new staff became more experienced with the maintenance of sport pitches, which was a highly skilled task. She commented that Watford Town Cricket Club was proud of its cricket pitch for example; and that Veolia was responsive to their requirements. Councillor Silver discussed an issue with a local rugby pitch and apparent poor maintenance. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head undertook to investigate with the Environmental Services Client Manager Parks and Streets whether further complaints about pitch marking had been received.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

With reference to item ES12 in the report; Councillor Counter asked whether the advertising campaign to help address the issue of fly posting was still ongoing (the cancelled campaign). The Partnerships and Performance Section Head undertook to find out.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

In response to a question from Councillor Dhindsa, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained what the various symbols on the report meant and the purpose of the 'trend' columns. In response to a further question from Councillor Dhindsa about item ES5 in the report; the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained the implications of the various outcomes. She highlighted that the growing seasons in Quarter's One and Two had been poor with not as much green composted waste produced as had been anticipated; this apparently due to the weather conditions. There were similar findings in June to August also. She then discussed, anecdotally, how moving out of recession had had an impact on the reduction in composted waste.

Councillor Joynes drew to attention a suggestion that there should be a county wide approach to collections and recycling and asked whether all local authorities in Hertfordshire used Veolia. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head said that not all authorities did, some were still in-house services and a single company would have to cover all areas to make this approach viable.

Councillor Dhindsa commented that Veolia seemed poor in picking up fallen leaves with a number of streets in his ward where they had not been properly removed. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that this could be a difficult issue as large volumes of leaves could suddenly fall off trees due to weather conditions. However, she undertook to investigate with Veolia how leaf collection was planned for.

Action – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

With reference to item ES12 in the report, Councillor Dhindsa asked, in relation to two allotment locations, what was the take up rate. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that the waiting list for Farm Terrace was now closed; with a current take up rate of around 28%. Councillor Dhindsa asked whether this figure was due to the uncertainty around the issue. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that the majority of people had not explained why they had left the site.

With reference to items LC2 and LC5 in the report; Councillor Williams asked why 'throughput' was measured as opposed to 'membership'; as these figures would be more meaningful. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head agreed that the data could be improved in that 'throughput' information did not provide useful personal detail of those using the facilities. She undertook to raise the issue with Veolia.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head.

Councillor Joynes discussed the implication on Black and Ethnic Minority data in relation to casual users at the leisure centres commenting that all of the figures may not be being captured.

In response to a question from Councillor Dhindsa in relation to the change in definition in item LC5 of the report and the implications around casual users; the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained the reasons for the change (as outlined in the report) commenting that this could be improved.

Councillor Dhindsa raised the potential of having women only gyms that might result in increased membership; such as at Woodside. He suggested that SLM should be asked if they had considered this issue. He commented that it might be a good idea to have men and women only gyms permanently; with West Herts already doing this. The Chair asked that the matter be raised with SLM at the meeting in January.

ACTION – Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer.

Members then had a discussion around women only swimming and whether research would help determine whether the concept was useful. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head drew attention to a body of research conducted around public health issues.

Councillor Joynes commented that the disabled did not seem to use gyms a great deal. The Chair suggested that usage was reasonable; providing an example of people suffering from Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis making use of the Woodside Leisure Centre.

With reference to item LC6 in the report; Councillor Dhindsa asked how long it took to resolve complaints and how well the facilities were maintained. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head undertook to investigate the issue and report back to the Panel.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

Councillor Joynes discussed issues around management of the leisure centres and the number of staff on duty. The Chair commented that good quality staff should be employed and wondered whether there were sufficient staff on duty currently. The Chair questioned the reliability of the information provided by SLM and discussed an example of periods in a gym with inadequate staffing and the implications for people with medical problems and the use of defibrillators. It was agreed that the matter be raised with SLM at the meeting in January.

ACTION – Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

The Chair discussed the implications of 'budget' gyms on local authority establishments – such as taking out staff to reduce costs. He outlined how any

new contract could guarantee appropriate staff numbers as measured against the service level agreement.

With reference to item LC11 in the report; Councillor Dhindsa commented that it was good that the number of complaints were reducing although there still seemed quite a lot. He asked, with reference to item LC13 in the report, what was the definition of 'community hires'. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head undertook to find out this information.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

Members then discussed issues around 'dark days', as mentioned in item LC15 of the report, commenting that care was needed in how the data was interpreted. They also discussed matters around the booking of tickets drawing an analogy with systems in the West End of London.

With reference to item RD2 in the report; Councillor Dhindsa considered the figure in relation to the number of appeals lost was rather high. Members had varying opinions on this issue where matters such as medical emergencies, people with disabilities and traffic wardens approached after issuing tickets were discussed. The Chair asked that the subject be raised at the February 2016 meeting when the Annual Parking Service Report would be discussed.

ACTION – Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

Councillor Joynes asked that before the new ICT contract was signed off, those running it should ask what were the key areas of the user requirement so as to ensure a 'bottom up' approach. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that a report on the new contract would be going before Cabinet at the 30th November meeting. She undertook to feedback Councillor Joynes's suggestion to the ICT Client Section Head.

ACTION – Partnerships and Performance Section Head

The Panel then formerly congratulated officers and HR staff on the excellent performance in relation to the low levels of sickness.

RESOLVED:

that the Panel note the report.

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VISIT TO THE WOODSIDE LEISURE CENTRE

The Panel then considered the themes to be discussed with SLM during the visit to the Woodside leisure Centre at the next meeting on 19th January 2016. It was agreed the following would be raised:

- The proactive maintenance of the leisure centres.
- Black and Minority Ethnic membership.

- Female membership.
- The potential for female only gymnasiums.
- Staffing levels and the implications for safety.
- Use made of the climbing wall.
- Standard of food in the cafeterias.

ACTION – Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

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UPDATE ON ACTIONS

The Chair drew the Panel's attention to the two actions from previous meetings which were contained in the agenda. It was noted that responses from SLM in relation to these actions would be provided at the meeting of the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel on 19th January 2016.

RESOLVED:

that the update on actions be noted.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.10 pm