

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 July 2017

Present: Councillor Ahsan Khan (Chair)
Councillors J Dhindsa (for minute numbers 20 to 22), A Dychton,
A Grimston, Asif Khan, R Martins, D Walford and T Williams

Also present: Bernie Harewood, Centre Manager Orbital Community
Centre, One YMCA (for minute numbers 17 to 21)
Joanna Kaey, Director of Enterprise, One YMCA (for minute
numbers 17 to 21)
Councillor S Johnson, Portfolio Holder (for minute numbers
17 to 23)
Councillor Mark Watkin, Portfolio Holder (for minute
numbers 17 to 23)

Officers: Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Head of Service Transformation
Corporate, Leisure and Community Client Section Head
Contract Monitoring Officer
Customer Service Section Head
Head of Housing
Planning Policy Section Head
Urban Design and Conservation Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

17 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hastrick. In the absence of Councillor Hastrick, Councillor Ahsan Khan, the Vice-chair, chaired the meeting.

18 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

19 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2017 were submitted and signed.

20 **Call-in**

It was noted that no executive decisions had been called in.

21 **Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework - Community Centre presentation**

The Leisure and Community Section Head informed the scrutiny committee that this item formed part of the rolling programme of presentations from the organisations operating the community centres.

Orbital Community Centre – One YMCA

A video was shown highlighting the different groups at the community centre and the activities available.

Bernie Harewood gave a presentation setting out information about the community centre; covering

- Operational information about the centre
- Usage of the community centre, including footfall increases since 2013
- User groups, including Oxford Study circle, the U3A, Herts NHS Trust
- Activities – exercise and dance, education, social/meetings, health awareness, cafés and worship
- User information – ethnic diversity, age, gender and address profile

The Chair noted that there had been no financial information included in the presentation.

Bernie Harewood informed councillors that the organisation received funding from the council and also raised income through the bookings it received. She advised that she could provide the scrutiny committee with this information.

Following a further question later in the meeting, the Leisure and Community Section Head advised that the organisation received £70,000 annually through the current commissioning framework. This was a management fee to the YMCA for running the venue. The organisation decided on how to use the venue. He explained that the end of year report would be presented to the scrutiny committee at its November meeting.

Councillor Williams thanked the representatives for their presentation and he had enjoyed the video showing some of the different user groups. He stated that his daughter attended ballet classes at the venue. He said that Bernie was

excellent she took control and looked after everyone. There was a great atmosphere at the centre. He asked how the Butterfly café was settling in and for the biggest challenges she envisaged for the future.

Bernie Harewood explained that the Butterfly café had started in June. It had moved from Hemel Hempstead. It was on its way to becoming a successful organisation. They were planning events for the summer holidays. The crèche was a wonderful facility for the area. It was bringing additional footfall, particularly during the quieter summer months at the centre.

Bernie Harewood said that the biggest challenge for Orbital Community Centre would be if the funding was taken away. The centre would likely struggle.

Following a question about publicity, Bernie Harewood advised that marketing had never been robust at the centre. The Oxford Study Centre's arrival had changed the dynamics of the centre. People often found out about activities by word of mouth. There were repeat bookings. More weekend parties would be welcomed. The centre was located in a tight knit community which was very supportive of the community centre. She added that a new manager had started who would be developing a marketing strategy.

Bernie Harewood explained that the centre did not offer discounts for local residents, however it did offer a loyalty rate for regular user. There was also a charity rate for charitable organisations. The NHS Trust benefitted from this rate.

The representatives were thanked for attending the meeting, giving their presentation and responding to councillors' questions.

22

Performance indicators as part of the council's performance management framework

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications which explained the council's approach to the setting, reporting and monitoring of performance information.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications gave a presentation about performance management, providing a definition and setting out the background to the performance management framework. She advised that indicators could be changed or updated in order to respond to business needs and priorities. She stated that councillors had a central role in understanding the indicators, setting them and monitoring their performance. They could also challenge whether the targets were sufficient or the indicators would improve the quality of service for residents. The council aimed to benchmark against

other authorities where possible. She posed the councillors several questions for them to consider.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications confirmed that the council did not have a performance measure related to the number of parking tickets issued. Legally the council was not able to do this.

Councillor Asif Khan said that there needed to be openness about performance levels. He commented on Watford Community Housing Trust and their response to the task group's recommendations. He noted that the Trust's priorities had changed.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications responded that sometimes it was easy to identify problems, but the solution could take some time before it was seen to be working. However, she acknowledged his comments about openness.

Councillor Martins commented that it was important that the indicators drove performance. He asked if the management used the information to improve performance.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications advised the scrutiny committee that the results were presented to Leadership Team. Improvements were being considered about the future management of the results. One suggested way forward was to hold performance clinics, with the Head of Service and relevant officers being asked about the results. This may help management to identify any issues earlier. Heads of Service also discussed the performance results with their relevant Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder for several services, said that he always asked officers why they had certain indicators and whether they were the right ones. The Customer Service Centre had changed the way it interacted with the community. The performance measurements may need to change. The performance information helped inform portfolio holders and enabled them to work with their services.

Councillor Dhindsa referred to the presentation of the data. He felt that sometimes it could be confusing, although recently it had improved. He also felt the council needed to be more open about the information. Councillors wanted to see improvement. Targets needed to be realistic and regularly reviewed.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications acknowledged the councillor's comments about the presentation and said she had tried different ways. She was happy to listen to any other suggestions.

Councillor Williams commented that for those performance indicators performing well or above their target, there should be an explanation if targets had not been increased.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications said that officers would work on the targets throughout the year. This had been mentioned by both this committee and Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Housing, encouraged the Labour councillors to work with the council on housing matters.

RESOLVED –

that the report on the council's performance indicators as part of the organisation's overall performance management framework be noted.

23

Quarter 4 2016/17: End of year (2016/17): Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications setting out the end of year results for the council's key performance indicators.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications referred to the results of the performance indicators for planning. These results were an example of where the service was performing well above the target. Members may wish to ask why it was set at 90% or whether the target could be more challenging. Planning performed well against benchmarking information. She advised that targets were set by the Head of Service.

The Customer Service Section Head informed the scrutiny committee that the Customer Service Centre received nearly 100,000 contacts each year. 36,000 of these were face to face in the Town Hall. The indicators were based on standard contact centre performance measure. However, the world was changing and the quality of service was important not just the volume of users. The number of visitors was split across a range of access channels, including online which was steadily increasing.

Following a question from Councillor Martins about the calls to Revenues and Benefits not being included, the Customer Service Section Head explained that the service used the same telephone system but the data was collated separately via the service's own contact centre.

Councillor Martins felt it was important that service's information was monitored. He said that people needed to understand what was happening in the service.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the scrutiny committee that Revenues and Benefits performance indicators were monitored by Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel. However it was noted that the scrutiny panel did not receive information about the service's response times for calls.

The Head of Housing explained each of the Housing performance indicators and set the context for the targets. He informed the scrutiny committee how officers were able to calculate the expected number of affordable homes that would be completed in the year. It was closely tied to the number of developments in the town. Officers would attempt to do more to attract external grants that could be used for developing affordable homes in the area. It was expected that in the coming five or ten years there would be a lot more developments that would provide further affordable homes. This was particularly due to the regeneration developments to be progressed in the town.

Following a question about the 35% requirement for affordable accommodation in new developments, the Head of Housing advised that some authorities set a higher percentage. However officers realised it was necessary to be sensible and did not want to put off developers if the percentage was too high. It was a balancing act. It may be possible to review the required percentage. He explained the different levels of affordable homes. Social rent was 60% of the local market rent. Affordable rent was 80% of the local market rent.

In response to a question about the target of 90 affordable homes completed within the year, the Head of Housing explained that a target was not relevant for this particular indicator. Officers were able to reasonably predict the number of properties that were expected. The reason the figure was lower would be due to development timescales slipping.

Councillor Asif Khan stated that the council needed to be bold and build more social housing. He was aware that some councils had taken developers to court for not providing the required percentage of affordable homes.

The Head of Housing informed councillors that Housing was consulted on planning applications and was being more robust about developers' proposals. Officers were requiring justification from the developer as to why they were not providing the relevant amount and the service was challenging viability statements.

Following a comment from Councillor Williams about the lower target for 2017/18, the Head of Housing confirmed it was as a result of the known developments due to come forward during the year. He said that in future he would ensure additional commentary was provided in the report.

The Head of Housing then referred to the indicators related to homelessness. It was not possible to set a target for these indicators as it was not reliant on officers' work but the volume of people approaching the council. The initial information had been broken down further; setting out the reasons people approached the council as homeless. Previously the main reason for people approaching the council was due to the family unit breaking down. However currently the highest number of people was due to the loss of private sector tenancies being terminated. The average difference between local housing allowance and rents was 30%. This was increasing month by month. It was expected that the local housing allowance would be frozen for the remainder of this Parliament. The local authority was not able to freeze the private sector rents in the same way. Any action on private sector rents would need to be agreed by the Government.

The Head of Housing stated that the council was working with Watford Community Housing Trust, through the joint venture, to create new affordable accommodation.

In response to a question from the Chair about parental evictions, the Head of Housing advised that there was a process which officers worked through for each individual case. The council had a statutory duty to take on those young people under 18. There was much good work with the county council in this area. Currently the biggest pressure on the council was the number of families approaching the council.

The Head of Housing then asked councillors to note the number of households living in temporary accommodation. He said that members may feel the level had stagnated, but he compared it to the situation in Luton. He felt the council should be able to achieve the target of 200 and the figures were monitored weekly. Any additional increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation would affect the council financially. Over the last year the service had managed to reduce the net cost of temporary accommodation by stopping some of the more expensive arrangements. The council continued to work with the Housing Trust and other housing associations.

Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder, commented that the work done by the Head of Housing and his team was critical. The creation of the new temporary accommodation was critical for the council's finances. Many people approaching the council could only afford the social rent levels in the area; most developers

offered affordable rent accommodation. This was more than many could afford to pay.

Councillor S Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Housing, said that councillors may not be happy with 35% contribution in new developments and it may be an area that needed reviewing. He cautioned that a higher percentage could mean that less development would come forward. The council needed to acquire the most affordable housing it could from the current system.

The Head of Housing informed the scrutiny committee about the number of re-lets available over the last year. This had reduced significantly over the last few years.

Councillor Grimston noted that there were many older people living in two or three bedroom properties. She enquired whether people were asked to move to smaller accommodation.

The Head of Housing explained that the housing associations provided incentives for people to move. However it was necessary to make any offer attractive to the person.

In response to a question about the council building property, the Head of Housing responded that the council was working on this through the joint vehicle. The first 40 units of temporary accommodation would be available later this year. There would also be 32 apartment units. Moving forward the biggest challenge would be financially.

The Head of Housing referred to the remaining performance measures. The final one was the annual check on the number of rough sleepers within the area. The council worked with New Hope. Recently they had been successful in obtaining a grant of £320,000 over the next two years to help with this area of work.

RESOLVED –

1. that the scrutiny committee notes the performance of the council's KPIs for 2016/17 for in-house services and that its comments be noted.
2. that the scrutiny committee notes the targets for the council's KPIs for in-house services 2016/17 and that its comments be noted.

24

Review update: Management of Conservation Areas

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Deputy Managing Director which included a delivery timeline showing how the task group's recommendations could fit in with the existing work programme.

The Planning Policy Section Head and the Urban Design and Conservation Manager explained how the recommendations would fit into the timeline and some of the work that would be required to meet the recommendation. For example the Article 4 directions had a time consuming process. Every property had to be listed and photographs taken. This aided enforcement. Discussion would need to take place with the Development Management team. Officers would be given additional training and would only need to approach specialist officers for the more complex cases.

Councillor Martins, who had chaired the original task group, thanked the officers for the timeline. He said that Watford was changing and the aim was to preserve conservation areas before they changed too much. The programme showed a proper plan of action.

RESOLVED –

that the timeline and approach set out in the report and Appendix 2 be agreed.

25

Executive Decision Progress Report

The Scrutiny Committee received the latest edition of the Executive Decision Progress Report for 2017/18.

RESOLVED –

that the updated report be noted.

26

Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee

As Councillor Hastrick had sent her apologies for the meeting, it was agreed she would be asked to forward a written update about the recent Joint Health Scrutiny Committee. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer added that she would circulate the link to the minutes as soon as it became available.

RESOLVED –

1. that Councillor Hastrick be asked to provide a written update on the last Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

2. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer circulates the link to the minutes.

27 **Budget Panel**

Councillor Asif Khan, chair of Budget Panel, advised that the panel had met on 27 June 2017. The minutes were available on the internet. He welcomed any questions from the scrutiny committee.

28 **Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel**

Councillor Williams, chair of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel, informed the scrutiny committee that the panel had met on 4 July. He also referred the scrutiny committee to the minutes on the internet and welcomed any questions.

29 **Community Safety Partnership Task Group**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the scrutiny committee that following the last meeting she had contacted all those councillors who had been nominated to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group. Councillor Martins had agreed to withdraw his nomination. The scrutiny committee was asked to approve the Task Group's membership, comprising –

- Councillor Amanda Grimston (Chair, as agreed at the previous meeting)
- Councillor Stephen Bolton
- Councillor Stephen Cavinder
- Councillor Jagtar Singh Dhindsa
- Councillor Mo Mills
- Councillor Glen Saffery
- Councillor Richard Smith

RESOLVED –

that the Community Safety Partnership Task Group comprises the following –

- Councillor Amanda Grimston (Chair)
- Councillor Stephen Bolton
- Councillor Stephen Cavinder
- Councillor Jagtar Singh Dhindsa
- Councillor Mo Mills
- Councillor Glen Saffery
- Councillor Richard Smith

30

Work Programme

The scrutiny committee received a draft work programme for 2017/18. It had been updated following the last meeting. Members were invited to contact the Committee and Scrutiny Officer with any further suggestions. The scrutiny committee was informed that Revenues and Benefits was scrutinised by Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel; however financial aspects were likely to be scrutinised by Budget Panel. If members had any suggestions on that subject they could contact the Chair, Councillor Williams or the Committee and Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED –

that the work programme be noted.

31

Dates of Next Meetings

- Thursday 28 September 2017
- Thursday 26 October 2017 (for call-in only)
- Thursday 23 November 2017

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 9.15 pm