

## **OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**25 September 2017**

Present: Councillor T Williams (Chair)  
Councillor S Cavinder (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors J Dhindsa, K Hastrick, M Hofman, P Kent (for minute numbers 10 and 11) and B Mauthoor

Also present: Councillor Taylor (Portfolio Holder)  
Karl Miles, Contract Manager SLM  
Gary Foley, General Manager, Watford Leisure Centre Central  
Kelly Spencer, General Manager, Watford Leisure Centre Woodside

Officers: Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Corporate, Leisure and Community Client Section Head  
Contract Monitoring Officer  
Sports Development Officer  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

### **7 Apologies for Absence/ Committee membership**

No apologies had been received.

### **8 Disclosures of interest**

The following councillors declared that they were members of the leisure centres: Councillor Tim Williams, Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor, Councillor Mark Hofman and Councillor Paddy Kent.

### **9 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017 were submitted and signed.

### **10 Scrutiny of the Leisure Centre Management Contract**

The panel received a report of the Head of Community and Environmental Services introducing the annual report by the leisure contractor, SLM.

The Leisure and Community Section Head introduced the report and explained that the contract was currently being retendered. He described the consultation which had taken place including the scrutiny task group and the consultation with users. As part of the oversight of the contract, officers met with SLM monthly and reviewed the key performance indicators. The annual report attached to the agenda was also part of the contract monitoring.

Following a question about the re-tendering process, it was agreed that officers would obtain advice about what information they could give to councillors about the bids. It was explained that the evaluation of the bids was weighted 45:55 on price and quality respectively. The in-house team was reviewing them along with the council's external advisers. The final decision would be going to Cabinet in December 2017 and would therefore be subject to call-in. Non-executive councillors had also had an opportunity to participate in the task group and to monitor the contract through the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel (OSSP).

The annual report was presented by the representatives from SLM. They provided an introduction to the company which had the brand name 'Everyone Active'. The centres had had a very successful year with the highest ever footfall recorded and some of the lowest attrition rates across the country.

It was agreed that further information about the attendance figures at both centres would also be made available to the councillors and it was suggested that a spreadsheet showing the data cumulatively would be useful.

There was a query about the number of staff employed by the two centres as there were some discrepancies in the figures quoted. It was agreed that the figures would be circulated to the panel.

The SLM representatives gave an overview of the health and safety standards. They were subject to regular reviews and both centres and the stadium were fully compliant. They maintained a low level of accidents per 10,000 visits and there had been no serious incidents in the last year. The most common type of accident was slips and robust procedures were in place to mitigate the risks.

It was reported that both leisure centres had been inspected by Quest, the UK Quality Mark for Sport and Leisure, and had been rated as 'excellent'. It was a significant achievement for the centres. It was explained that the community outcomes reviewed by the Quest process included looking at participation levels, apprenticeships and GP referral schemes. None of the modules in the inspection had scored less than 'good'; the panel asked for a breakdown of all the modules in the inspection for the Watford centres. The Central leisure centre was in the top 16 nationally and Woodside was in the top 24. Under the new leisure

contract that was being retendered, the Council would pick two of the Quest modules that would be part of future inspections.

Discussing the career development of colleagues, the SLM managers provided a number of examples of staff who had gained promotions through the company. They gave an overview of the training and opportunities available and discussed the apprenticeship scheme. The centres had approximately 10 apprentices who were generally aged between 16 and 18.

Considering the breakdown of the staff, officers noted that as the survey was not compulsory the data about the workforce was incomplete and clear conclusions could not be drawn. Officers agreed to discuss the matter with the Head of Human Resources so that a letter could be drafted encouraging staff to complete the information.

The panel discussed feedback from users of the leisure centres. The Chair and Vice Chair of the panel had attended a user forum and they reported that despite the low attendance the feedback had been constructive.

The SLM representatives gave an overview of the PR and communications that were undertaken. All users were encouraged to have an Everyone Active card and there was a range of discounts available for different groups.

Turning to the facilities' maintenance and investment; the details of recent improvements were outlined. It was suggested that signage on equipment which was out of use could be improved.

Members discussed the exercise classes which had waiting lists. The process of reviewing the popularity of classes was explained and users were encouraged to sign up to the waiting lists and they would be contacted if a space became available. Measures were in place to discourage users from failing to attend classes they had booked.

Carbon reduction was an important goal for the leisure centres and some of the schemes and systems in place were described to councillors. The increase in the consumption of gas at Woodside was due to issues with the boiler which had been resolved. Officers underlined that this was also an important part of the commissioning framework where the wider impact of contracts were measured.

The panel considered the women-only swimming sessions which took place at Central leisure centre. This was a more suitable venue than Woodside as there was more privacy. Following a question about the possibility of further sessions, it was explained that the current session was not at capacity and that aqua aerobics and swimming lessons were also available so maximum use could be

made of the time. There was no space in the timetable for further sessions. The situation would be kept under review. Although the council had received a Freedom of Information request relating to male-only sessions; there was not a demand for this.

The panel thanked the team at SLM and the officers.

RESOLVED –

1. that the progress of the contract be noted.
2. that the actions requested be undertaken.

## 11 **Performance report (Q1 2017/18)**

An error was noted on page 33 (indicator 20) which should have read “This includes £214,753 for **Woodside** Bowls Club...” This figure was correct as at the end of June 2017.

The panel received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications. The report provided the results for the key performance indicators identified for Watford Borough Council’s outsourced services for quarter 1 2017/18.

The panel considered the indicators in the report and asked questions of clarification and made comments.

Following up on previous questions about the target levels for Revenues and Benefits; it was explained that the new Head of Service had been cautious about setting more challenging targets whilst the council was introducing improvements to its IT systems. Revenues and Benefits’ performance was vulnerable to any IT-related issues.

There was a discussion about the variation in the targets across the different quarters of the year. This was due to the peaks in demand that the service experienced and ensured that the target setting reflected this. Officers were keen to drive improvement and the Portfolio Holders regularly reviewed targets. OSSP also had a role in scrutinising and questioning targets.

Referring to the issue with the mechanical sweepers which had had an impact on levels of detritus (indicator 10); members questioned whether the programme of retirement for the equipment should be reviewed. The Portfolio Holder clarified that it had been a decision to deliberately prolong the use of such equipment for financial reasons.

Discussing the reasons for Watford's performance in waste recycled and composted (indicator 7); it was noted that other districts had more properties with larger gardens which created more compostable waste. There were also a large number of flats in Watford and in general these types of properties recycled less. It was not easy to produce a breakdown by ward as the collection routes crossed ward boundaries. The council was keen to reduce the amount of food waste in the black bins.

Considering the council's performance in relation to fly tipping, the panel was advised that the indicators were seen by Overview and Scrutiny. It was agreed that Environmental Health would be asked to feedback to councillors with the outcomes of investigations.

The panel was pleased to note that levels of sickness absence were decreasing; there was a strong emphasis on the return to work interviews and the absence level was also linked to the motivation and satisfaction of employees.

The return rate of the IT surveys (indicator 32) remained low; staff would be encouraged to complete these and the officer suggested that annual surveys may return more meaningful results.

RESOLVED –

1. that the report be noted.
2. the actions requested be undertaken.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 9.25 pm