

OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

20 March 2019

Present: Councillor S Cavinder (Chair)
Councillor M Hofman (Vice-Chair)
Councillors K Hastrick, R Martins, B Mauthoor and G Saffery

Also present: Neil Hutchins, Account Director, NSL
John Konate, Client Account Manager, NSL

Officers: Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Parking Services Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IS)

31 Apologies for Absence/ Committee membership

Councillor Dhindsa sent his apologies.

32 Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

33 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2019 were submitted and signed.

34 Parking enforcement contract with NSL

The panel received a report from the Parking Manager, where he outlined the details of the contract with NSL and outlined the key changes and improvements to the service:

- extended hours of enforcement
- wider remit
- increased income
- improved service with less staff due to increased use of technology
- new initiatives to tackle parking around schools
- improvements in dealing with persistent offenders
- one day per month for enforcement on persistent offenders

There followed a discussion around enforcement and removal of vehicles, where councillors expressed concerns about costs of vehicle removal, impounding of vehicles and the use of bailiffs. The Parking Manager explained the legislation covering this and that bailiffs had been used in Watford for a long time. Further questions regarding statistics were raised and the Chair signposted members to the annual report and suggested discussing with the Parking Manager outside the meeting.

There followed questions around data protection and GDPR compliance if personal details on persistent offenders were held. All were assured that this was lawful.

There followed explanations of the back office functions, equipment changes and intelligent patrols for improved efficiency.

Councillor Mauthoor asked about any exemption for community nurses. It was explained that this was not the case, but there were a number of other options such as special permits for those with special needs and each resident has 400 hours per year of visitor permits.

There followed a discussion around educating motorists about parking and its enforcement. The panel expressed concern that education was important and asked what was being done to address this. The Parking Manager admitted that despite the parking guide being published for all to read, plus ongoing education in schools (targeting parents via educating their children was highly efficient), this was an area for improvement. However, many of the processes were tightly governed by legislation, so there was little room for manoeuvre.

Councillor Hofman asked where the £700,000 raised in parking fines was spent. The Parking Manager explained that parking was required to be self-funding and the funds raised were ring-fenced for transport initiatives such as the freedom passes.

Councillor Mauthoor asked if the parking officers received any training in identifying suspicious activity, or persons with special needs in order to tie in with Police/PCSOs and the work of the Community Safety Partnership. Councillor Hofman added to this, asking if the staff were dementia trained.

Neil Hutchings, Account Director, NSL responded that he recently met with the Police on such issues and his staff were dementia trained.

At this point, the Chair drew the discussion on the annual report to a close and invited Neil Hutchings, Account Director, NSL to deliver his report, contained in the agenda.

The report was discussed and a question was asked about consultation with residents. The Parking Manager explained that this would normally be carried out by the council, not the contractor.

There followed a discussion around payment methods and in particular, cashless payments. Neil Hutchings explained that cash was not being removed, rather other methods of payment were being added. The Parking Manager added that strategic changes such as this were driven by Watford Borough Council and he confirmed that a range of payment methods would continue to be offered and cash payments would continue to form part of that range.

Councillor Saffery asked if there had been an increase in enforcement patrols at schools. Neil Hutchings stated that patrols were now deployed more carefully and intelligently.

There followed a brief discussion around the features of the parking machines. The Parking Manager confirmed that NSL did not make the machines and that nationally, as there were only a couple of manufacturers, the features tended to be standardised.

The Chair thanked the NSL representatives and the Parking Manager and his Deputy for their input.

RESOLVED –

that the report and presentation be noted.

35

End of Quarter 3 2018/19: Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report

The Chair gave a brief introduction to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and invited the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications to present her report.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications pointed out that performance for some KPIs had fallen in Quarter 3, but that this was a common issue within the third quarter, due to the impact of Christmas and seasonal variations. She added that the figures usually recovered well during the final quarter.

There was a discussion around the Woodside sports centre. It was noted that attendance was up, following a dip during the refurbishment. A question was posed, why the dip had not been profiled in the expected performance for the

period as it was known that the refurbishment was coming. This was accepted by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications.

There followed a discussion around some of the KPIs, in particular KPI 27, sickness. The panel noted that sickness was an indicator of morale and the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications pointed out that the council has an older workforce, which can impact on long-term sickness, and the on-going Watford 2020 transformation programme may be two factors that had affected sickness levels. The Chair commented that he sometimes received emails quite late at night from staff and, although this was not directly related to sickness, felt it should be noted. The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications agreed to take this up with the Head of Human Resources.

The panel noted that staff welfare was an important issue.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

The formal business of the committee concluded, the Chair noted that this was the final OSSP meeting and thanked all members and contributors for their invaluable work. Councillor Hofman, on behalf of the committee, thanked the Chair for his sterling work.

Chair
Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel

The meeting started at 7.05 p.m.
and finished at 8.10 p.m.