



Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny Watford Borough Council 2017/18

A report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer

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1. Introduction and overview of 2017/18

In 2017/18 the scrutiny structure comprised Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the overarching committee, Budget Panel, Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel and the Community Safety Partnership Task Group which continued to monitor the Community Safety Partnership. (See scrutiny structure on this page.)

One task group took place during 2017/18 –

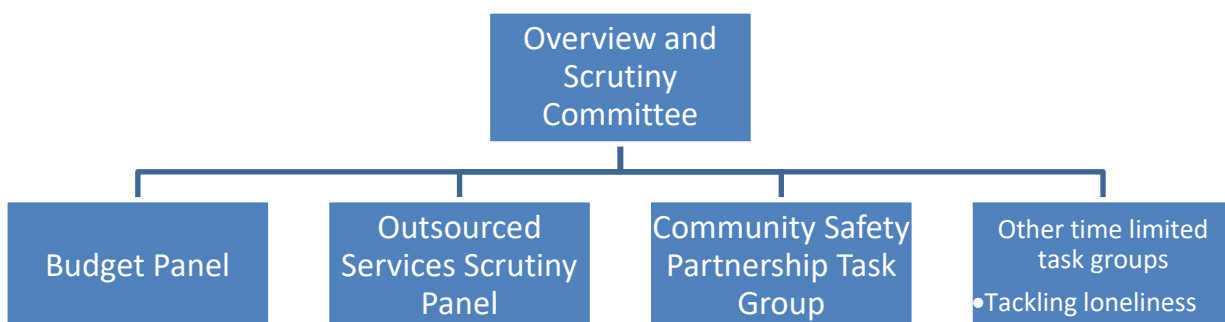
- Tackling Loneliness

The Annual Survey has been carried out and a summary of the results can be found in section 6 of this report. However the number of responses have been very disappointing this year and it is difficult to reach any meaningful conclusions.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer has continued to attend the Hertfordshire Scrutiny Network, a network of officers from the County Council , the ten district and borough councils within Hertfordshire and neighbouring local authorities in Bedfordshire. The network provides an opportunity to share scrutiny related information and training across the councils. Further details are provided in section 7.5.

In 2017/18, 30 out of 36 councillors attended at least one scrutiny meeting; this was three fewer than in 2016/17. 24 councillors have participated in a scrutiny meeting as either a member or a substitute. Five portfolio holders attended scrutiny meetings to respond to questions on behalf of the Executive. One councillor attended a meeting solely as an observer and participated when permitted by the scrutiny committee.

Scrutiny structure 2017/18



2. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership:

Councillor Kareen Hastrick (Chair)

Councillor Ahsan Khan (Vice Chair)

Councillors Jagtar Singh Dhindsa, Aga Dychton, Amanda Grimston, Asif Khan, Rabi Martins, Darren Walford and Tim Williams

The following councillors also participated in Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the year: Councillors Bilqees Mauthoor (Chair of the Tackling Loneliness Task Group), and Peter Jeffree (observer and proposer of a scrutiny topic)

The following Portfolio Holders attended Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the year: Councillors Karen Collett (Portfolio Holder for Communities), Stephen Johnson (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property) and Councillor Mark Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Service).

2.1 The Committee's work programme for 2017/18

Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on six occasions this year. The scrutiny committee received reports and discussed the following subjects –

- **Performance updates** were presented on a quarterly basis. At the meetings councillors discussed the performance indicators and sought clarification in certain areas. The scrutiny committee also received a report which outlined the council's approach to the setting, reporting and monitoring of performance information.
- **Small Grants Fund Review 2016-17** gave the scrutiny committee a chance to receive the annual review of the Small Grants Fund. Officers provided highlights of their review and key findings.
- **Commissioning Framework – Community Centres** gave an opportunity for the scrutiny committee to receive presentations from the different organisations who operated the community centres within Watford. Each organisation gave a presentation and responded to councillors' questions.
- **Commissioning Framework 2016/17 – year 1 review** provided the scrutiny committee with the annual report of the Commissioning Framework for the previous year. The scrutiny committee agreed to a proposal for a task group review of the framework during 2018/19.
- **Previous review update: Management of Conservation Areas** was presented at two meetings during the year as the scrutiny committee was not satisfied with the initial update.
- **Previous review update: Parking Strategy (Year 1 recommendations)** was also presented at two meetings during in the year due to the scrutiny committee's concerns following the first update.

- **Watford 2020 Programme and updates** were presented to the scrutiny committee providing councillors up to date progress on this important transformation programme for the council. This will continue to be regularly reported during the programme's progress.
- **Customer Service Centre Refurbishment** report and presentation provided councillors with an overview of the changes to the area and staff and customers' experiences with the new arrangements.
- **Executive Decision Progress report** included details of all proposed key decisions and those key decisions taken by the Executive and officers. It also included information about any consultation with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report included links to the relevant reports and minutes.
- **Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee** updates were provided by Councillor Karen Hastrick, who provided information on the work carried out by the Health Scrutiny Committee. Full details of the Health Scrutiny Committee are available on the [County Council's website](#).
- **Updates from Budget Panel, Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel and Community Safety Partnership Task Group** were given by the relevant chairs. The updates enabled Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be aware of the work being undertaken by the other scrutiny panels and task groups.
- **New scrutiny task groups** were presented for discussion by the scrutiny committee. The scrutiny committee agreed one task group which took place during the year and two suggestions for 2018. The task group chair provided an update and presented the final report. A further proposal, submitted following the tragic fire at Grenfell, was put on hold whilst reviews, set up by the Government, were being carried out. The task groups are set out in more detail below and in section 5.
- **Task Group –**

Tackling Loneliness was proposed by Councillor Mauthoor following a discussion at Council. The task group's final report and recommendations were agreed by Cabinet.

Further information about task groups can be found in Section 5.

2.2 Call-in

No Executive decisions were called in during 2017/18.

The reports and minutes for Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be found on the council's website – [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)

2.3 Chair's commentary

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has continued to review services; it has scrutinised policy, performance and progress throughout the year. The committee continues to monitor the ongoing pressures that make demands on services.

Taken from the description on the WBC website, the OSC role includes:

- monitoring all scrutiny taking place in Watford
- setting up task groups and monitoring their progress
- reviewing the progress of agreed task group recommendations
- reviewing the Executive decisions taken by cabinet, portfolio holders and officers
- monitoring the performance of services provided directly by the council
- hearing any called in decisions or councillor calls for action
- contributing to the annual scrutiny report

The OSC continues to play the role as 'critical friend' to the council and as such it is crucial for the committee to be involved with decisions at an early stage in order to apply real influence.

It is important to underline the fact that Watford Borough's officers are to be highly commended, not only those that attended meetings, for their team work with other departments and agencies to assist with the task group investigations.

The committee continues to receive reports from Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel, Budget Panel, the Community Safety Partnership Task Group and the county's Health Scrutiny Committee. This is so all members are updated on the work of the Scrutiny Committees, particularly PIs, topics and policies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Vice Chair, Cllr Ahsan Khan, all members of the OSC and the other scrutiny committees for all their hard work and support over the year. Moreover, my thanks to all the officers at WBC especially the Scrutiny Officers and members of Democratic Services, all the outside agencies, stakeholders and members of the public and last but not least, all those Councillors who found time to participate in the task groups.

Special mention should be made regarding the Task Group on Tackling Loneliness, very enthusiastically and ably chaired by Cllr Mauthoor. Cllr Mauthoor raised the issue at full Council receiving support from all the members. As part of their investigations the Task Group held a day of interviews with relevant bodies which in effect had all the organisations networking and promoted the importance the issue was held in by ALL Council Members. This united front continues. You may have noticed there has been a lot of interest across the board in the period since the Task Group looked into the resources available – not purely a co-incidence I feel. In addition the Task Group has not given up following submission of their recommendations and has held an informal meeting with more to follow to monitor the results of the recommendations. A great success for which Cllr Mauthoor should be commended and the Task Group Members thanked

Councillor Kareen Hastrick
Chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017/18

3. Budget Panel

Membership:

Councillor Asif Khan (Chair)

Councillor Mark Hofman (Vice Chair)

Councillors Nigel Bell, Aga Dychton, Joe Fahmy, Rabi Martins, Maggie Parker, Glen Saffery and Nasreen Shah

The following Councillors also participated in Budget Panel during the year: Councillors Tim Williams (substitute) and Stephen Bolton (substitute).

The following Portfolio Holder attended Budget Panel during the year: Councillor Mark Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Service.)

3.1 Budget Panel's work programme for 2017/18

Budget Panel met on five occasions during the year. The panel received reports and discussed the following subjects –

- **The final outturn for 2016/17** (quarter 4) was reviewed prior to it being presented to Cabinet. Budget Panel considered in particular: the net revenue outturn, carry forwards for projects not yet completed in 2016/17, revisions to the capital budget, the management of projects by officers and the impact of temporary accommodation costs on the council's finances. Budget Panel's recommendations to Cabinet were agreed.
- **Use of capital receipts for revenue purposes.** At the request of members, the flexible use of capital receipts for revenue expenditure was considered by the panel. It was noted that, in order to use capital receipts in this way, the council would be required to prepare at least one Flexible Use of Capital Receipts (FCR) Strategy for each financial year. The strategy would need to be approved by full council.
- **Commercialisation.** Following previous consideration of this issue, the panel reviewed progress of the council's commercialisation programme. This was based on four key strands: maximising value from the council's assets, charging for the council's services, generating novel income and being more business-like in the council's undertakings.
- **The Finance Digest Budget Monitor** was reviewed regularly by Budget Panel. Members monitored the expenditure, income and pressures on services.
- **Budget report 2018/21.** The Panel considered the budget report, which included the revenue budgets for 2018-21 and revised 2017/18 budget, capital programme for 2018-21, Council's income charging policy (including fees and charges) and the Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19. The minutes of the discussion were forwarded to Cabinet.

3.2 Training

Training was provided in September and November to give members an understanding of the role of Budget Panel in reviewing Watford Borough Council's finances.

The reports and minutes for Budget Panel are available on the council's website – <http://watford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteId=120>

3.3 Chair's commentary

With the national government's continued pursuit of austerity and the uncertainty of BREXIT, local government finances are continually going to be squeezed. It is more important than ever that there remains a constant scrutiny of finance and the plans of Watford Borough Council to provide services for residents, ensure the most vulnerable are protected and have a balanced budget.

The previous year, the level of discussion and scrutiny was excellent. The Budget Panel members early on recognised the need for a municipal entrepreneurial approach to ensure revenue streams for the council, there was scrutiny of fees and fines giving suggestions to the cabinet for changes to burial fees as an example. The continued questioning of the Medium Term Financial Strategy ensured members were updated on the council's financial position.

The members of the panel worked very well together. Disagreements were debated in an honest and respectful way. It is important that this continues in forthcoming years.

Councillor Asif Khan
Chair Budget Panel 2017/18

4. Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel 2017/18

Membership

Councillor Tim Williams (Chair)

Councillor Stephen Cavinder (Vice Chair)

Councillors Jagtar Singh Dhindsa, Kareen Hastrick, Mark Hofman, Paddy Kent and Bilqees Mauthoor

The following councillor also attended Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel during the year:
Councillor Rabi Martins (observer)

The following executive councillors also attended the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel during the year: Councillors Iain Sharpe (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development), Councillor Peter Taylor (Portfolio Holder for Client Services), Councillor Mark Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Service).

4.1 The panel's Work programme for 2017/18

Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel met on six occasions this year. The panel received reports and discussed the following subjects –

- **Understanding performance indicators** provided the panel with the opportunity to consider performance indicators in the wider context of the council's performance management toolkit.
- **Quarterly performance indicators** were provided by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications. Over the course of the year, the target-setting process was discussed and members challenged any targets which they did not feel were sufficiently robust. Further explanation was requested for areas of under-performance.
- **The leisure centres – managed by SLM** started with a tour of Watford Leisure Centre Woodside, which was followed by the panel meeting representatives of SLM. Among the topics discussed were attendance figures, health and safety, and the quality accreditations received by the centres.
- **The Colosseum – managed by HQ Theatres** also started with the panel being given a tour of the Colosseum. Representatives from HQ Theatres provided an overview of the year including some of the highlights. Councillors raised issues including customer satisfaction, community events and the structure of the contract.
- **Parks and Open Spaces – managed by Veolia** saw the panel receiving a presentation with an overview of recent activities, the parks, allotments and play improvement programmes and the Green Flag programme.
- **The ICT service** provided the panel with an update on the latest position of the ICT service and how it was structured. Also discussed were the IT Strategy, the improvement programme and the performance against targets.

- **New Watford Market – managed by Town and Country Markets (TCM)** enabled the panel to receive a presentation followed by a discussion on the recent history of the market as well as occupancy levels, marketing and special events with representatives from TCM.
- **Revenues and Benefits** gave the panel an opportunity to consider housing benefit overpayments, council tax collections, debtors and the performance of the service.

4.2 Chair's Commentary

During the course of the year the panel looked in detail at a number of the council's outsourced services, how these were being managed, and how they were performing against the council's expectations and agreed performance indicators.

Further to reports provided, presentations given and visits the panel recognised that overall the Veolia (Parks & Open Spaces), SLM, New Watford Market and HQ Theatres contracts were being well-managed.

The panel also looked in detail at the ICT and the Revenues & Benefits shared services with Three Rivers District Council - both services were deemed to be performing well.

On a quarterly basis we reviewed the performance indicators and challenged/questioned the performance and targets that we felt were not being met, required further explanation or were now inappropriate. Over the course of the year there was a consensus that the performance indicators needed to be reviewed to ensure that they meet the council's expectations particularly as a number had not been reviewed or changed for fifteen years or more.

I would like to thank the members of the panel for their scrutiny of the council's outsourced services, for their questioning and for their due diligence.

On behalf of the panel I would like to thank all the officers involved for their hard work and support which has ensured that the panel has had a successful year.

Also thanks to our outsourced service providers for facilitating visits and for attending our meetings.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Portfolio Holders who attended our meetings and for responding to our points and answering our questions.

Councillor Tim Williams
Chair of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel
2017-2018

5. Task Groups

5.1 Community Safety Partnership Task Group

5.1.1 Membership

Councillor Amanda Grimston (Chair)

Councillors Stephen Bolton, Stephen Cavinder, Jagtar Singh Dhindsa, Mo Mills, Glen Saffery and Richard Smith

The Community Safety Partnership Task Group is a statutory forum established to scrutinise the work of the local Community Safety Partnership.

5.1.2 Work programme

The task group met on four occasions. The following topics were considered at meetings –

- **The Community Safety Partnership's response to hate crime**
The Community Safety Coordinator outlined the partnership's response to hate crime and explained that the local profile was now more clearly understood - with reporting mechanisms helping to develop the picture and indicate causes.
- **Mental health and drugs misuse** was discussed in depth at two meetings of the task group. At the first, the Community Safety Coordinator explained the partnership's structure for dealing with the issues, how cases were progressed and how Watford was regarded as adopting best practice. At the second meeting, representatives from the Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust and New Hope outlined how their organisations supported individuals with these problems.
- **Progress with the CSP Protection our Communities and Managing Crime Plan 2016/17**
At all meetings, the Community Safety Coordinator updated the task group on progress with the annual CSP plan; focussing on six key elements.
- **Community Safety Partnership risk register presentation** informed members as to how the risk register helped determine partnership priorities for the 2018/19 year.

5.2 Tackling Loneliness task Group

5.2.1 Membership:

Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor (Chair)

Councillors Stephen Bolton, Stephen Cavinder, Kareen Hastrick, Rabi Martins

5.2.2 This task group was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 22 June 2017 following a proposal from Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor within a motion to Council in March.

The task group had its first meeting on 22 September 2017. It held an all day scrutiny session in December, inviting relevant organisations to discuss the work they carried out on this subject. The final report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny at its meeting on 18 January 2018 when it was agreed the report would be forwarded to Cabinet. Cabinet discussed the report on 5 March 2018. Cabinet's response was reported to Overview and Scrutiny at its meeting on 18 March 2018.

The reports and minutes of all scrutiny meetings and completed Task Groups are available on the Council's website -

<http://watford.moderngov.co.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

Task Groups' final reports are available in the online [Library](#).

5.3 Suggestions for future task groups

Tall Buildings and Watford Borough Council's Emergency Plan

A suggestion was submitted following the tragic incident at Grenfell Tower in West London. The proposal was put forward by Councillors Nigel Bell and Peter Jeffree. Following a discussion at Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2017 it was agreed that a members' briefing would be arranged to inform councillors about the council's emergency planning arrangements. It was also considered that due to the current inquiries being undertaken into the tragedy the task group would be delayed until the reports had been produced.

Commissioning Framework Review

This proposal was included within the end of year report on the Commissioning Framework, presented by the Leisure and Community Section Head. Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a new task group to review the current commissioned organisations, whether other organisations should be commissioned and if the funding cycle should be changed. This task group will take place during 2018/19.

Watford Community Housing

Councillors Asif Khan and Kareen Hastrick submitted a suggestion following contact from a local resident. The resident is a tenant of Watford Community Housing and was dissatisfied with the services provided by the Trust's contractors. He also felt tenants did not receive value for money from the service charge they paid to the Trust. This task group will take place during 2018/19

For further information please contact the Committee and Scrutiny Officer.

6. 2017/18 Scrutiny Survey Results

An annual scrutiny survey is carried out and councillors and those officers who have been involved with scrutiny during the preceding year are asked to participate.

6.1 Councillors' survey

Of the 36 councillors in Watford Borough Council, five have completed the survey; this is a big reduction compared to the 2016/17 results, when 17 participated in the survey. One out of the 24 councillors who were permanent or substitute members of a scrutiny committee or task group during 2017/18 completed the survey. The results of the 2017/18 survey showed that:

- One indicated they had been a member of scrutiny or a task group
- Two were Executive councillors
- Two had been members of scrutiny committees or task groups but not during 2017/18

Due to the number of responses it is difficult to carry out any meaningful comparisons with previous years.

Members were asked to rate how effective they felt different aspects of the scrutiny work were in the five key areas identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

- Making an impact on the delivery of public services
- Leading and owning the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- Reflecting the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Providing a 'critical friend' challenge to external authorities and agencies
- Providing a 'critical friend' challenge to the executive

All five respondents completed the questions about scrutiny's roles in policy development, performance management, budget and finance and task groups. The scores were out of five with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Most roles received an average rating of 3.2 or higher. However, the rating for budget and finance scrutiny was between 2 and 3.

Councillors were asked to add any comments about the different aspects of scrutiny's role, including policy development, performance management, budget/finance role and task groups.

Policy Development

Three councillors provided the following comments –

- "It needs to be stronger and the executive to be prepared to take note more."
- "Needs to reflect the feelings of the public – the public need to be brought back into the process. Topics that are dear to them or where there is an interest."
- "The vast majority of Watford residents are unaware that we have a scrutiny process and, as far as I know, the committee has done little to promote itself as the voice of the community. The lack of task groups this year underlines this point vividly. When

task groups have run they have generally been very effective. This lack of more in depth scrutiny means that policy decisions are less well-informed than they might be, Disappointing.”

Performance Management

One councillor provided the following comment –

- “As an Executive member responsible for a number of outsourced services, it is useful to have these services reviewed critically on a regular basis which is generally well done. But as for scrutinising on behalf of the public, I have no idea as the Committee has never engaged with the public to find out.”

Budget/finance

Two councillors provided the following comments –

- “Budget Panel needs to be more robust- not everyone is clear and so they need to be more knowledgeable in terms of the process.”
- “To improve the effectiveness of this committee would be need to have a more informed Chair. One has a feeling that the Committee's approach is somewhat random and scatter gun. When members challenge, they do so effectively. It is not its role to challenge outside agencies hence the low score. It also fails to engage with the public.”

Task Groups

Three councillors provided the following comments –

- “They need to attract as many backbench cllrs as possible to be able to think 'out of the box”
- “An important piece of work- this is exactly the type of task group we need.”
- “This was an effective and useful piece of work which may well stimulate more like it. Its a shame it was the only one.”

All five councillors gave their views about how scrutiny could be improved in the future. Shown below are the comments received. Democratic Services’ responses are shown in italics.

- “cllrs need to be encouraged to come forward by thinking that their views will be taken on board by the executive.”

The recent scrutiny training encouraged councillors to consider where they may find ideas for the scrutiny work programmes. Several examples were provided, including the Council’s Corporate Plan. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer is happy to meet councillors to discuss their ideas and consider whether they would be suitable for one of the scrutiny committees and panels or a new task group.

- “More public involvement.
Look at various ways to advertise what tasks groups are held- to make the public more

aware as to what Scrutiny does- what's its function.”

- “There needs to be a greater attempt to look outwards and seek the views of the community. The Council is setting off in a radical direction and faces more challenges than ever before so the risk of losing touch with its community is very real. OSC is the one area who should be focussing on this.”

Democratic Services publishes dates of all committees, including task groups, on the council’s website and on the town hall noticeboards. When task groups have a direct public connection officers have ensured the meetings are publicised wider. Examples include flyers being delivered to the relevant households, social media and notices on community notice boards. Councillors have been encouraged to contact their local resident groups to spread the message further.

The council’s website includes information about [scrutiny](#) and [how the public can get involved](#).

- “The structure works well in general, having been developed over a period of several years. However the Budget Panel remains ineffective.”

Democratic Services has noted the comments about Budget Panel. There is a new chair for 2018/19 and the team will work with him to encourage scrutiny in this important area.

- “Perhaps we should have a formalised scrutiny of the strategic plan.”

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer will discuss this suggestion with the chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and see if there are areas that could be scrutinised by that committee.

6.2 Officers’ survey

This survey, similar to the councillors’ survey, was completed by 6 officers from three services; all had been involved with scrutiny during 2017/18. The survey showed they all felt that they understood their role.

Five officers stated that they had been appropriately briefed by the committee and scrutiny team. One replied ‘partially’ and commented “having dates in the diary as early as possible”. The committee and scrutiny team will ensure that all officers are aware of the scrutiny committee and panel dates which are available on the council’s website and intranet.

Three suggestions have been received for future reviews. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer is aware of the suggestion to review the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework, which is due to start in July 2018. The Head of Service Transformation has proposed more in depth scrutiny of aspects of the Watford 2020 programme. Overview and Scrutiny Committee already receives regular updates on the programme, but the Committee and Scrutiny Officer will discuss the idea with the head of service and ensure the proposal form is completed. The final suggestion was ‘green initiatives’.

When asked how scrutiny could be improved one comment was received (response is shown in italics):

- “Would be better for me if IT went to Overview and Scrutiny rather than outsourced services as it is now an in-house service.”

The terms of reference for Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel include those services shared with Three Rivers District Council, together with those where Watford Borough Council is the lead authority. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer will explain this to the head of service.

7. Other Scrutiny work

7.1 Scrutiny Training

An introduction to scrutiny at Watford Borough Council is covered in Democratic Services’ presentation to new councillors at their induction. In addition the Committee and Scrutiny Officer provided an overview and scrutiny foundation training session which was open to all councillors. Councillor Hastrick the chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2017/18 attended the training and was able to add to the discussion, by explaining her experience of scrutiny and the important role non-executive councillors had in the decision-making process.

There were two training sessions at Budget Panel in 2017/18; all councillors were notified of the sessions. The training sessions covered an overview of local government finance and how the council is funded and the process of budget setting.

7.2 Scrutiny Handbook – An Introduction to Scrutiny

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer updated the Scrutiny Handbook, which has been placed on the intranet, ensuring it is available for councillors throughout the year. The handbook provides an introduction to scrutiny and its role at Watford Borough Council. It has a section on questioning skills and the different types of questions that could be used with their advantages and disadvantages. It also includes a list of previous scrutiny reviews and the list of documents available from the scrutiny library. The handbook will continue to be reviewed and adapted as required.

7.3 Scrutiny Library

The scrutiny library has been included in the scrutiny handbook ‘An Introduction to Scrutiny’, which is given to newly elected members and is available on the council’s intranet for members’ reference. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer regularly monitors the information and updates it accordingly.

7.4 Hertfordshire Scrutiny Network

The Scrutiny Network has continued to hold meetings throughout 2017/18. The network comprises officers from Hertfordshire County Council, the districts and borough councils within Hertfordshire and representatives from local authorities in Bedfordshire. Each authority's work programmes are circulated to the other councils, enabling officers to see what else is being scrutinised around the county. The network enables officers to share experiences and feedback from any training they have participated in.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informs the Managing Director, Heads of Service, the Mayor and relevant Portfolio Holders of scrutiny topic groups arranged by Hertfordshire County Council. This allows officers and the Executive to consider whether they wish to be involved in the review, either by submitting a statement to the topic group or attending as a witness. Final reports from topic groups are circulated to relevant officers and councillors within the authority, enabling them to identify any recommendations related to the district and borough councils.

For further information on this report or copies of the final reports produced by the Task Groups, please contact -

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