



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Additional information circulated at
the meeting**

Wednesday, 21st September, 2011

7.00 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Publication date: 5 October 2011

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Sandra Hancock in Legal and Property Services on 01923 278377 or by email to legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk (Minicom available on 01923 278499).

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor M Watkin (Chair)

Councillor S Rackett (Vice-Chair)

Councillors N Bell, S Greenslade, K Hastrick, P Jeffree, S Johnson, R Martins and K McLeod

AGENDA

PART A - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS (Pages 1 - 4)

The document sets out the update on the outstanding actions which arose at previous meetings.

8. FORWARD PLAN (Pages 5 - 12)

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference the latest edition of the Forward Plan is attached for Members to review.

9. WORK PROGRAMME AND TASK GROUPS (Pages 13 - 22)

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the current version of the work programme.

Agenda Item 4

PI 11 – Explanation of the events since Council on 20 July 2011

The Community Services Section Head has advised that with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services, he had met the lead petitioner, Wahida Pervez.

The Community Services Section Head reported the following actions –

- Key Worker attached to the session, Sean Mitchell the General Manager
- Swimming lessons had finished and all facilities were now available to the swimmers
- Numbers in pool – SLM had reported that bathing loads (100) had not been exceeded. On 2 occasions there had been 75 people present. The average is 45.
- Congestion at the till had been eased by the introduction of a faster booking in procedure.
- Staff vigilance had been stepped up regarding men in the changing area during the women-only session.
- 4 lifeguards would undertake equalities training.

This page is intentionally left blank

Outstanding Actions
Response to action AHR5

- 1) In relation to housing provided by private landlords whose rent is guaranteed by Rent Guarantee Scheme, please clarify what procedures and protection there is for low income families on the Council's housing register.**

Under the rent deposit guarantee scheme, landlords can make a claim at the end of the tenancy up to value of one month's rent. This may be for damage or rent arrears. The council does not guarantee the rent over and above this amount. Prior to the council agreeing to sign a bond under the scheme, the landlord must provide gas and electricity safety certificates. We also carry out a land registry check to determine whether the landlord is the registered owner of the property. The Housing department will also carry out an inventory prior to the tenancy commencement.

Any tenant of rented property whether or not on the deposit scheme is afforded the same rights in relation to the condition of their property. Environmental Health will investigate all complaints in relation to conditions and ensure that any sufficiently serious risks to health and safety (as defined in the Housing Act 2004) are remedied by the landlord through enforcement mechanisms.

- 2) Is there a procedure Members should follow when they receive complaints from residents about the standard of accommodation?**

If a resident is occupying a property under the Rent Deposit Scheme, it would be helpful if Members could notify Donovan Elliott who is co-ordinating the scheme within the Housing Department. He will then notify Environmental Health colleagues who will investigate.

If a resident is a tenant outside of the Rent Deposit Scheme, in either private or social rented properties, Members should advise residents to first speak with their landlord, but if their concerns are not addressed to contact Environmental Health at envhealth@watford.gov.uk, or 01923 278503.

- 3) Does the Council have a responsibility for the condition of the homes people accept through the rent guarantee scheme?**

The condition of the properties is the responsibility of the landlord and should be stated in the tenancy agreement. In a significant number of cases applicants will identify a property themselves and only seek assistance through the financial aspect of the bond. In other cases applicants will view properties which Housing has become aware are vacant and where landlords are willing to accept tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. Housing officers seek to ensure the safety of occupiers through the gas and electric requirements stated above.

For all rented properties, whether or not they are within the Rent Deposit Scheme, Environmental Health has enforcement powers regarding conditions which come to the attention of the council.

4) Does the Council have a procedure for monitoring complaints about individual landlords?

Complaints received by Environmental Health about property condition are logged on a central database.

5) If a family accepts the Rent Guarantee Scheme and finds the accommodation is of a poor standard, who should they contact and what rights do they have with regards getting back on to the housing register?

Initial contact should be made with Donovan Elliott in the Housing Department who co-ordinates the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. He will refer the residents to Environmental Health for further advice and assistance on property condition issues; they will work to improve the standards. Households within privately rented accommodation within Watford would usually be eligible for the Housing Register. However, if families are living in self contained accommodation which is not overcrowded, or presenting risks to their health and safety they will not attract the same priority banding as those in greater housing need or who have no accommodation.

6) What rights do tenants have if a landlord acts inappropriately, e.g. entering the property without notice or prior agreement, and the tenant leaves the property and makes themselves homeless?

If a landlord breaches the tenancy agreement, tenants have the right to seek legal redress. We would advise residents to contact the Housing Department for further advice if they are considering leaving a property and do not have alternative accommodation. Our Prevention and Advice Team will work with residents to resolve issues which could lead to their homelessness wherever possible. Each case would need to be examined in detail but there is a risk that where households leave accommodation voluntarily (even if they feel there are compelling reasons to do so) they may be found intentionally homeless under the legislation.

7) Is there a minimum floor space for accommodation under the Rent Guarantee Scheme?

No there is not a minimum floor space.



Watford Borough Council FORWARD PLAN

October 2011 - January 2012 Issue

Contact Officer: Pat Thornton,
Democratic Services Manager
Telephone: 01923 278372
Email: Legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Issued: 15 September 2011

Corporate Management Board

FORWARD PLAN

October 2011 - January 2012

- The Forward Plan sets out key decisions the Executive intends to take over the following four months.
- A key decision involves expenditure of over £50,000 or significantly affects two or more wards within Watford.
- The Plan is updated and published on the Council's web-site each month. Copies are also available in the Customer Service Centre.
- Members of the public are entitled to view copies of the documents used in making a decision (column 8), unless they are confidential or exempt under the provisions of the Local Government Act. If you wish to view a document please contact the Committee Services Manager (details above)
- Local residents may submit a petition to the Cabinet or to a portfolio holder making a decision. A petition must be signed by at least 30 local electors and sent to the Committee Services Manager at least 7 clear working days before the meeting or decision date
- A Key Decision must be in the Plan at least 14 days before the period in which it is to be taken. The decision dates are indicative and occasionally subject to change. Please contact Legal & Democratic Services if you wish to check the decision date for a particular item.
- A list of all key decisions taken and details of whether or not they have been called in is published on the Council's website.

Membership of the Cabinet and their portfolios:

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill	Community Services
Councillor Iain Sharpe	Planning and Legal & Property
Councillor Derek Scudder	Environmental Services
Councillor Andy Wylie	Finance and Shared Services.

Decision	Department	Contact Officer and extension number	Decision Maker	Date/Period decision is to be taken	Proposed consultees and how they are to be consulted	Documents to be used to assist the decision-maker
----------	------------	--------------------------------------	----------------	-------------------------------------	--	---

Improve the health of the town and enhance its heritage

Approval to appoint consultants to develop detailed design options for public realm improvements to the Parade	Planning	Yvonne Shaw Town Centre Programme Manager	Cabinet	November 2011	None at this stage. The general public and stakeholder groups will be consulted on the design options produced. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out on the preferred option.	None.
Approval of the Herts Waste Partnership Agreement	Environmental Services	Alan Gough Head of Environmental Services alan.gough@watford.gov.uk	Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services	November 2011	This will not be a new policy so no new Equality Impact Assessment undertaken.	Herts Waste Partnership Agreement & covering report

Decision	Department	Contact Officer and extension number	Decision Maker	Date/Period decision is to be taken	Proposed consultees and how they are to be consulted	Documents to be used to assist the decision-maker
Approval of the Watford Character of the Area Study	Planning	Philip Bylo Manager, Planning Policy philip.bylo@watford.gov.uk	Cabinet	December 2011	The Watford Character of the Area Study has been through a 6 week internal consultation and a 6 week public consultation. The former included relevant stakeholders, such as the 'Town Centre Coordination Group'. The public consultation included letters/emails being sent out to elected members, residents associations, community groups and heritage groups. A press release was produced and an article on the consultation will be included in the September edition of 'About Watford'.	Watford Character of the Area Study 2011 Watford Character of the Area Study (consultation draft) - representations

Decision	Department	Contact Officer and extension number	Decision Maker	Date/Period decision is to be taken	Proposed consultees and how they are to be consulted	Documents to be used to assist the decision-maker
<i>Enhance the town's clean and green environment</i>						
Adoption of the Framework and 5 year Action Plan for allotments across the borough.	Community Services	Paul Rabbitts paul.rabbitts@watford.gov.uk	Cabinet	November 2011	Consultation on development of the strategy was carried out with over 400 responses (42% response) and the strategy has been passed to all allotment supervisors for all sites and feedback received. Feedback also going to the Equalities Panel in September 2011.	Watford Allotments Strategy - Framework and Action Plan
<i>Supporting individuals and the community</i>						
Approval of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy	Community Services	Rachel Dawson Housing Section Head Rachel.dawson@watford.gov.uk	Cabinet	November 2011	Relevant staff. Equalities Panel and other specific equalities groups. Members and stakeholders.	Private Sector Renewal Policy Equality Impact Assessment Cabinet report & appendices

Decision	Department	Contact Officer and extension number	Decision Maker	Date/Period decision is to be taken	Proposed consultees and how they are to be consulted	Documents to be used to assist the decision-maker
To decide whether to approve the recommendations of the Housing Value for Money Review Phase 2.	Community Services	Rachel Dawson Housing Section Head Rachel.dawson@watford.gov.uk	Cabinet	December 2011	Staff, service users, partner agencies, other council departments, elected members through a combination of workshops, briefings, one to one contacts as appropriate.	Value for Money Review Background documentation Equalities Impact Assessment
<i>Securing an efficient, effective, value for money council</i>						
To approve the redesign of the play service commencing 1st April 2012	Community Services	Gary Oliver Section Head gary.oliver@watford.gov.uk	Cabinet	November 2011	Staff. Leadership Team. Public Feedback	Play Review 2010 Cabinet report - October 2010
To approve the voluntary sector funding review for 2012/13	Community Services	Lesley Palumbo Head of Community Services lesley.palumbo@watford.gov.uk	Cabinet	November 2011	Leadership Team Existing voluntary sector grants recipients.	Grants criteria and guidance notes Service user and equalities risk assessments Feedback from consultation and consultation documents

This page is intentionally left blank

Past Scrutiny Reports

Review topic	Scrutiny Committee/ Task Group	Date of final report to Scrutiny Committee	Date of consideration by Cabinet/Executive	Date of Cabinet response to Scrutiny Committee	Signed off or to be kept under review?
Bus Services	Policy Development	17 January 2006	19 June 2006	18 September 2006	Superseded by SWHTS
Social and Community Cohesion	Policy Development	11 July 2006	12 September 2006	8 January 2007	No conclusion
The Colosseum	Policy Development	8 January 2007	26 February 2007 (and 18 June 2007- officers' report)	10 July 2007	Under review
Sustainable Development	Policy Development	12 March 2007	16 July 2007	18 September 2007	No conclusion
Community and Neighbourhood Engagement	Policy Development	4 December 2007	17 March 2008	19 October 2010	Signed off
Green Spaces	Call-in and Performance task Group	12 March 2008		9 July 2008 Portfolio Holder attended meeting and responded to the recommendations 4 February 2010 – follow up	No conclusion

Review topic	Scrutiny Committee/ Task Group	Date of final report to Scrutiny Committee	Date of consideration by Cabinet/Executive	Date of Cabinet response to Scrutiny Committee	Signed off or to be kept under review?
Night-time Economy	Policy Development	02 April 2008	16 June 2008	16 September 2008	Signed off
Arts and Sports Development	Policy Development Task Group	3 June 2008	16 June 2008	22 Feb 2011	Under review
Public Pride	Policy Development	5 January 2009	21 April 2009	18 January 2011	Under review
St Albans Road Study and Action Plan	Call-in and Performance task Group	8 June 2009	September 2009 – Portfolio Holder response 2 November 2009 - Cabinet	24 September 2009	No conclusion
Services for Older People	Policy Development	8 June 2009	20 July 2009	15 March 2011	Under review
Obesity	Policy Development Task Group with Stevenage BC)	Task Group c/o HCC	7 September 2009	22 February 2011	No conclusion
Equalities	Policy Development	05 January 2010	22 February 2010	14 September 2010	Under review
South-West Herts Transportation Strategy	Policy Development	15 June 2010	1 November 2010	1 December 2010	Signed off

Review topic	Scrutiny Committee/ Task Group	Date of final report to Scrutiny Committee	Date of consideration by Cabinet/Executive	Date of Cabinet response to Scrutiny Committee	Signed off or to be kept under review?
Services for the Deceased	Policy Development Task Group)	9 November 2010	13 December 2010	18 January 2011	Under review
Choice-Based Lettings	Call-in and Performance	3 February 2011	Due to go to PH then Cabinet...?		
Elections in 2010	Call-in and Performance	3 February 2011	Due to go to Returning Officer then Council...?		
Leisure Centres	Call-in and Performance	9 March 2011			Under review
Licensing Enforcement	Call-in and Performance	9 March 2011			Under review
Neighbourhood Forums	Call-in and Performance Task Group	9 March 2011	30 March 2011 (Constitution Working Party)	TBC	TBC
Support for the Voluntary Sector	Call-in and Performance Task Group	9 March 2011	6 June 2011	23 June 2011	Under review
Affordable Housing	Policy Development	15 March 2011	22 March 2011	26 July 2011	Under review

This page is intentionally left blank

Suggestions for topics to be scrutinised – evaluation table

A Member/Officer suggesting a topic for scrutiny must complete this table as fully as possible. Completed tables will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny for consideration.

Proposer: Councillor/Officer Derek Scudder	
<p>Topic recommended for scrutiny:</p> <p><i>Please include as much detail as is available about the specific issues and areas which should be included/excluded from the review. Should the focus be on past performance, future policy or both?</i></p>	<p>Review recycling systems used by other councils to see if any would aid in increasing the recycling rate in Watford, whilst maintaining the principle of weekly collections. An example of an alternative system is that recently adopted by Three Rivers, but there may be others.</p>
<p>Why have you recommended this topic for scrutiny?</p>	<p>To see if the recycling rates can be increased.</p>
<p>What are the specific outcomes you wish to see from the review?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>As above</p>

Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?	
It must affect a group or community of people	Yes – all residents of the Borough <i>Give details</i>
It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake	Yes – waste collection <i>Give details</i>
It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months <i>There will be exceptions to this arising from notified changing circumstances. Scrutiny will also maintain an interest in the progress of recommendations and issues arising from past reports.</i>	Not subject to previous scrutiny <i>Please confirm</i>
It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee	I can confirm <i>Please confirm</i>

<p>Does the topic meet the council's priorities?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the health of the town and enhance its heritage 2. Enhance the town's 'clean & green' environment 3. Enhance the town's sustainability 4. Enhance the town's economic prosperity and potential 5. Supporting individuals and the community 6. Securing an efficient, effective, value for money council 7. Influence and partnership delivery <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please confirm which ones</i></p> <p>2, 3, 6 & 7</p>
<p>Are you aware of any limitations of time or other constraints which need to be taken into account?</p> <p><i>Factors to consider are forthcoming milestones, demands on the relevant service area and member availability</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Include details</i></p> <p>No</p>
<p>Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Include details</i></p> <p>No</p>
<p>Please complete the 'sign off' section at the end of this document</p>	

The following section to be completed by Democratic Services	
<p>Consultation with relevant Heads of Service <i>(this section to be completed by Democratic Services)</i></p>	<p><i>It is important to ensure that the relevant service can support a review by providing the necessary documents and attending meetings as necessary. The Head of Service's comments should be obtained before the request to hold a review is put to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</i></p>
<p>Has the relevant Head of Service been consulted?</p> <p>Is this a topic which the service department(s) is able to support.</p> <p>When was the last time this service was the subject of a scrutiny review?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p><i>Yes, however most of the information will need to come from other local authorities, such as TRDC</i></p> <p><i>I am not aware that the waste and recycling has been the subject of a specific scrutiny review.</i></p>

Sign off			
Councillor/Officer Derek Scudder	date 16/09/11	Head of Service Alan Gough	Date 21.09.11

This page is intentionally left blank