

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**18 JUNE 2015**

Present: Councillor K Collett (Chair)  
Councillors N Bell, M Hofman, A Joynes, A Khan, R Martins,  
A Rindl, S Silver and D Walford

Officers: Partnerships and Performance Section Head  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Bell replaced Councillor Dhindsa, Councillor Hofman replaced Councillor Hastrick, Councillor Martins replaced Councillor Crout and Councillor Silver replaced Councillor Topping.

### **2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2015 were submitted and signed.

### **4 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

The Scrutiny Committee received a list of outstanding Actions and Questions. Members noted the updates.

#### **PI39 – Complaints resolved at stage one and complaints resolved within 10 days**

The Chair noted that officers were still unable to provide information as requested at a previous meeting. This was due to the problems referred to in the performance report on the agenda. The issues with ICT had an impact on all services within the Council and was unsatisfactory. She said that Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel needed to be robust in its scrutiny of the ICT service and contract.

Councillor Khan noted that the Managing Director should have provided an update on this matter. He was unaware that this had happened. He also asked for details of any planned contingencies that might be put in place.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer responded that officers had recently been provided with an update on the situation. She would contact the Managing Director and ask if this could be circulated to all Councillors.

The Chair said that she was concerned that due to the ICT problems Members' scrutiny was being affected and answers could not be given when requested.

Councillor Bell added that he was concerned that the ICT problems could start to affect the service received by residents, for example Housing Benefit calculations.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

5 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURES (IN-HOUSE SERVICES) - QUARTER 4: (JANUARY - MARCH) 2014/15**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head which provided an update on the Council's performance indicators for non-outsourced services at Quarter 4.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee of its role in reviewing the indicators throughout the year for those services which continued to be provided by the Council.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head reported that there continued to be a high demand for housing and that the service was struggling with the supply of accommodation. The Interim Housing Section Head had started at the beginning of the week. They would be looking at the service's performance and would try to balance demand and supply.

Members were advised that the planning service continued to perform strongly and was a strength of the Council.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the Customer Service Centre indicators showed a strong performance. However, ICT issues caused problems reporting on the Customer Services' indicators for complaints. She assured Members that complaints to the Council were being dealt with by the individual services.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that she was able to report that the result for indicator CS2 (improved street and environmental cleanliness) had been received. The Council had been

informed that the service had been rated as 'effective', which had met the target for the year. She explained how the service was monitored and then assessed in order to reach the result.

### **CS3 – Affordable homes on identified sites**

Councillor Khan advised the Scrutiny Committee that he had had a discussion with a developer about the percentage of affordable housing required for new sites. The developer had said that the current percentage deterred developers from developing their sites. He suggested that social landlords should be encouraged to develop more sites. He also suggested that the Council should develop policies enabling it to develop and build housing; it could include some commercial elements in the schemes.

Councillor Martins said that this was an important issue for the Council but also the whole country. From his experience at Development Control Committee and Development Management Committee, fewer developers wanted to provide affordable housing and they used the viability test to reduce the required number of units. In addition he had noted that social landlords were becoming commercial landlords and building units for commercial rents. Members needed to lobby Government and ensure that social landlords developed social housing and not units let at commercial rent levels.

The Chair informed Members that Richard Harrington MP had been invited to the next Housing Policy Advisory Group to respond to questions about this matter.

Councillor Martins suggested that a report should be presented at a future meeting to discuss the issue of social housing and its development. He added that the MP should be invited to attend.

Councillor Khan commented that he felt, as there was not the accommodation for families, unable to help residents seeking support. He said that it was necessary to think how the matter could be solved and if there was any leverage the Council could use; whether that was in the form of monetary support to organisations by lending the finances or in building units. He noted that the Council had withdrawn its connection to the HARI partnership. He felt that there was land in Three Rivers that could be used for new social housing developments.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head responded that it was a complex matter. The Head of Regeneration and Development would be working with the neighbouring authorities including Three Rivers District Council and Hertsmere Borough Council. Each authority had its own housing needs it had to address. The future-proofing of housing needed co-operation between authorities.

Councillor Rindl noted the reduction in the target for the number of affordable homes in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. She asked how this target had been set. She was concerned that it had been reduced whereas evidence showed that more was needed.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that officers reviewed the approved development schemes and calculated the number of units that should be created.

#### **CS5 – Number of private sector units secured for use under HomeLet**

Councillor Joynes referred to a specific case and asked about the Council's duty of care to families.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head acknowledged that the HomeLet scheme had had problems generating properties for those in housing need. The service relied on private sector landlords signing up to the scheme. This would be another focus for the new Interim Housing Section Head.

The Chair suggested that it was possibly difficult to attract private landlords to join the scheme as Housing Benefit was paid directly to the claimant. There were some tenants who needed support and this was not a sensible solution as they did not pay their rent as required. She suggested that HomeLet should be added to the future report.

#### **CS4 – Number of households living in temporary accommodation**

Councillor Bell said that he agreed with the previous comments and that practical solutions were needed. He asked the Partnerships and Performance Section Head if she could provide members with the number of people who had been provided temporary accommodation outside of the Borough.

The Chair felt that as more visitors came to the town and required hotel accommodation, the hotels would not want to release rooms to the Council as they would want the rooms for their own customers.

Councillor Bell asked if Members could be provided with details of how many hotels were used by the Council. It was noted that following the previous meeting the Head of Community and Customer Services had circulated a document listing the temporary accommodation within Watford.

Councillor Rindl asked whether officers could provide comparable information with similar towns.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head said it would be possible. She advised that if the indicator was compared to many of the towns in Hertfordshire it was likely to compare badly because of Watford's location and economic role in the county. Comparisons would also be made with other towns outside of Hertfordshire, for example Luton. The figures for London Boroughs were likely to be high so were not good comparisons. She commented that Watford had more in common with other urban towns than the majority in Hertfordshire.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head added that it had been unforeseen how high the numbers would rise. There had been a change in

profile of the types of people approaching the Council; for example there had been a significant increase in the number of young men with mental health issues coming forward. There was not necessarily a clear reason for this.

### **CS7 – Number of people sleeping rough on a single night**

In response to a question from Councillor Rindl, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that this indicator was reported as a snapshot of one specific night. There had been an increase in comparison to 2013/14. New Hope Trust kept a regular check on rough sleepers and were aware of the numbers sleeping rough throughout the year. The organisation was able to analyse who the people were and their reasons for sleeping rough.

### **Other comments**

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that there was a review of the Customer Service Centre being carried out. It included the customer service standards and the layout of the Customer Service Centre.

Councillor Hofman asked whether it was possible to show trends for the indicators over a period of 10 years. This would help to highlight any long term trends or recent increases.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that there were a number of indicators which had been reported for some time and she would be able to provide that information.

RESOLVED –

that the Scrutiny Committee's comments on the performance of the Council's performance measures for those areas where the Council directly delivers the service/ area of work at the end of quarter 4 2014/15 be noted.

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## **EXECUTIVE DECISION PROGRESS REPORT**

The Scrutiny Committee received the final edition of the Executive Decision Progress Report 2014/15 and the first edition for 2015/16.

### **2015/16 edition**

Following questions from several Councillors, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer agreed to check which Bowls Club was referred to in the notice.

In response to a question from Councillor Rindl, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained about decisions taken under the 'Special Urgency' procedure rule and how the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny was contacted requesting permission for the decision to go ahead.

The Chair added that when she was asked for this approval she would often contact the relevant officer for further information before giving approval.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that she would contact the Head of Regeneration and Development and ask whether there had been any Member involvement in the development of the Economic Development Strategy.

### **2014/15 edition**

Councillor Khan noted the decisions about the wireless connectivity project. He questioned whether officers had the expertise in this field. His experience through the Shared Services Joint Committee had not been good in this particular area.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would forward the link to the Cabinet reports and minutes she had provided to the Scrutiny Committee following the previous meeting. The decision was included in the latest Notice of Executive Decisions.

RESOLVED –

that the report be noted.

## **7 HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Scrutiny Committee was reminded that Councillor Hastrick had been appointed as the Council's representative to the Health Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reported that the first meeting of the Municipal Year had been held that morning. She had noted that the Health Scrutiny Committee had received an update on the West Herts Strategic Review. She agreed to circulate the link to this report to the Scrutiny Committee.

The agendas, reports and minutes for the Health Scrutiny Committee were available on the County Council's website.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

## **8 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out details of those Councillors who had said that they would like to be considered for membership of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group.

It was noted that six Councillors had submitted an expression of interest in the Task Group. Members agreed that this was a suitable number and that all those who had requested that they were considered should be appointed.

Members discussed whether two meetings were sufficient.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the Council was legally required to have a scrutiny committee that would scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership. Two meetings had been suggested to ensure it reviewed the Partnerships strategic priorities. The Task Group would still be able to request all-Member briefings it had had in the past; however the Task Group's meetings should be taking a strategic look rather than considering individual matters.

Councillor Khan agreed that there were other avenues for Members to raise local issues, for example at the Anti Social Behaviour Advisory Group (ASBAG).

The Chair asked that all Members were provided with details of the dates and times for ASBAG.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Community Safety Partnership Task Group shall comprise six Councillors during 2015/16.
2. that the following Councillors be appointed to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group for 2015/16 –
  - Councillor Stephen Bolton
  - Councillor Rabi Martins
  - Councillor Binita Mehta
  - Councillor Sohail Bashir
  - Councillor Seamus Williams
  - Councillor Mo Mills

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## **BUDGET PANEL**

The Scrutiny Committee noted that Budget Panel's first meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 7 July 2015. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the 2015/16 committee membership comprised Councillors Khan (Chair), Joynes (Vice-Chair), Bell, Counter, Derbyshire, Hofman, Martins, Whitman and T Williams.

The Chair stated that it was important that all scrutiny panels and task groups reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This ensured that Overview and Scrutiny Committee was aware of the scrutiny work taking place within the Council.

RESOLVED –

that the date of the first meeting and the membership of Budget Panel be noted.

10 **OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

The Scrutiny Committee noted that Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel's first meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 6 July 2015. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the 2015/16 committee membership comprised Councillors Crout (Chair), Counter (Vice-Chair), Dhindsa, Joynes, Martins, Silver and S Williams.

RESOLVED –

that the date of the first meeting and the membership of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel be noted.

11 **VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK (COMMUNITY CENTRES) TASK GROUP UPDATE**

Councillor Martins, the Chair of the Task Group, updated the Scrutiny Committee on progress. He advised that the Task Group had had to meet in a short time frame to allow officers to carry out their required work prior to its presentation to Cabinet. However, the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services' report to Cabinet would now be presented in September rather than July.

Councillor Martins asked Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider whether the Task Group's recommendations should suggest a tiered funding approach for the six community centres. He outlined other recommendations proposed by the Task Group.

The Chair, who had been a member of the Task group, added that a key element that had arisen from the review was 'communications'. Members felt that local residents were not aware of the events held at the community centres. They had suggested that community centres should work with the Council's Communications Team to publicise their venues and events.

Councillor Martins commented that many of the community centres did not have the marketing expertise.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer proposed that the Task Group's final report was included on the agenda for the July meeting. This would enable the Scrutiny Committee to review the Task Group's report and make any amendments to the recommendations. Members would be able to see the supporting evidence and make an informed decision.

Councillor Khan said that his experience with community centres had shown them not to be professional. It had been difficult to find hire charges. The



centres were a great asset to their local areas and communication was key. He felt that the minimum requirement for the organisations running the centres was a Charter.

Councillor Martins replied that the Task group had discussed the centres' management and had recognised that the organisations had variable skills.

Following a question from Councillor Hofman about the current Property review, Councillor Martins explained that the future of Centrepoint needed to be considered as part of the review and establish the best option for the site.

In response to a question from Councillor Rindl, the Chair advised that the Task Group had been provided with the income and multiple deprivation statistics for each area where the centres were located.

Councillor Silver questioned whether the current Boundary Review might have some impact on the centres.

Councillor Martins explained that the centres provided facilities for the areas where they were located and the electoral boundaries were not relevant.

RESOLVED –

that the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework (Community Centres) Task Group's final report be presented for consideration in July.

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## **CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES (CPZ) POLICIES TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer which included the Controlled Parking Zone Policies Task Group's final report and minutes from the Cabinet meetings held on 16 February and 9 March 2015.

The Chair provided an update on the Task Group and the process that had been followed.

Councillor Joynes, who had been a member of the Task Group said that she had felt the process had worked well and that Members had been able to provide support to officers.

Councillor Silver asked for the reasons that had led to recommendation 8 in the report. He questioned why it had been agreed to specify 'children under 16 years of age'.

Councillor Khan suggested that those aged 17 and over may be able to drive. However it was noted that the recommendation appeared to exempt those who were 16 years old.

It was agreed that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer would contact the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head and query this on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee.

Following a question from Councillor Khan about business permits, it was explained that there had been abuse of the original scheme. The criteria required the business vehicle to be used throughout the day, for example for deliveries, and not used solely to get to and from the business premises.

It was agreed that the recommendations would be reviewed at the Scrutiny Committee's November meeting. Officers would be asked to provide information on any impacts that had been found as a result of the updated policies.

RESOLVED –

that a review of the Task Group's recommendations be added to the work programme for the November meeting.

### 13 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Committee received a draft work programme containing suggested subjects, which had been based on the Chair's discussion of the Corporate Plan with the Partnerships and Performance Section Head and Committee and Scrutiny Officer.

The additional items discussed at this meeting would be added to the programme.

RESOLVED –

that the work programme be agreed and amended as discussed at the meeting.

### 14 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Thursday 9 July 2015 (For call-in only)
- Monday 20 July 2015
- Wednesday 29 July 2015 (For call-in only)

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.10 pm  
and finished at 9.00 pm