

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 September 2016

Present: Councillor K Hastrick (Chair)
Councillor J Dhindsa (Vice-Chair)
Councillors J Fahmy, Asif Khan, R Martins, A Rindl, N Shah,
D Walford and T Williams

Officers: Corporate, Leisure and Community Client Section Head
Partnerships and Performance Section Head
Grants Officer
Commissioning Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

27 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

There was no change to the membership of this meeting.

28 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interests.

29 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 were submitted and signed.

30 **Call-in**

No Executive decisions were called in.

31 **Small Grants Fund Review 2013-2016**

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head, which provided an overview of the Small Grants Fund for the last three years.

The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head introduced the report. He explained that this was the first of three reports which would be presented to the scrutiny committee. The second report would be a review of the Commissioning Framework and the final report would provide information about equalities data obtained through the Commissioning Framework. Following this the scrutiny committee would be able to invite the funded organisations for a more in depth scrutiny of their service.

The Commissioning Officers explained the information contained within the report and how they had amended some of their processes following a consultation with successful applicants. They would be working with colleagues to create an online application form for applicants. They would also be working with Communications to develop a 12-month publicity programme, ensuring that the fund was promoted after quiet periods, for example the summer holidays and Christmas. A mapping exercise had been carried out which highlighted the number of applications from each ward.

The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head informed the scrutiny committee that the report had also been presented to the portfolio holders and Leadership Team. The Mayor had noted the number of larger organisations that applied for funding from the Small Grants Fund. She felt it might be necessary to introduce a reserve level for organisations. He said that the main challenge for the team was that more outreach work needed to be carried out, particularly with smaller groups in local areas. Officers had arranged for drop-in sessions to be held at Centrepoint and Meriden Community Centre.

Councillor Dhindsa commented that it was difficult to see the details on the maps within the agenda pack. He felt that a graph might be more useful in highlighting the number of applications in each ward.

Following further questions from Councillor Dhindsa, the Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head advised that the portfolio holders and Leadership Team had agreed that ward councillors should be informed when applications were received for their wards. All application decisions were published by Democratic Services on the council's website.

In response to questions about organisations from outside the borough being awarded funding, officers explained that the postal address for the organisation may be outside of Watford but the project had to be provided within Watford for Watford residents. An example was Watford and District Mencap, the registered office was in Rickmansworth but the activity was solely for Watford residents. The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head suggested that the amount the organisation received and where the activity was delivered could be added to the annual report.

Councillor Martins suggested that those projects which were not ward based could be separated out from those actually for a ward. There appeared to be numerous successful applications for Central Ward, however some of these were not specifically for that ward.

The scrutiny committee was informed that unsuccessful applicants were always given an explanation as to why they had not been successful. They were signposted to Watford and Three Rivers Trust or other relevant organisations that may be of help. Unsuccessful organisations were always welcome to try again. In 2015/16 three or four organisations had been unsuccessful as the funds had run out for that year. They had been advised and told they could apply again from 1 April 2016.

Organisations were able to submit a further application after two years, but it had to be for a different project.

The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head advised that once officers had spoken to smaller groups it may be necessary to adjust the processes further. Currently funding would not be granted for white goods or sports equipment. Groups were not awarded a grant to fund a bid writer or consultant.

Following a question about the prevention of misuse of the fund, the Commissioning Officer (LC) explained that all groups were required to provide feedback and include receipts. Officers also asked if they could visit the groups, which often enabled them to see the project for themselves.

In response to a question about match funding, the Commissioning Officer (KB) responded that there was a question within the application form which asked if the group had made other applications, had other budgets to cover some of the cost or was carrying out fund-raising activities. Sometime the projects were valued at more than the maximum £2,000 grant. Officers asked for details of the applications and when it would be known if it was successful. They then checked on that decision.

The Commissioning Officer (KB) informed the scrutiny committee that the team did not write applications on behalf of groups when directing them to other sources of funding. However, this was part of the service provided by Watford and Three Rivers Trust and other organisations. Officers would direct groups to those organisations for support and advice. Officers provided as much support and advice as they could for applicants to Watford's Small Grants Fund.

Following a further question, the Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head explained that through the Commissioning Framework, Watford and Three Rivers Trust was awarded funds to provide advice and support to other groups and organisations. The Trust had bid writers and was aware of all the different funding streams available, from the very small grants to the larger, for example the Big Lottery Fund.

The Chair thanked the officers for the information and their responses to councillors' questions.

RESOLVED –

that the report be noted.

32

Scrutiny proposal - Leisure service procurement

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out information about a new task group suggestion from the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services.

The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head explained the reason for the suggested task group. The information gathered through the survey would provide insight into how the facilities were used and suggestions for the future. He stated that the non-executive councillors' feedback would feed into his report for the portfolio holder meeting in November. A report about the re-tender of the contract would then be presented to Cabinet at its February meeting and not January as indicated within the report.

The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head agreed to arrange for the survey link to be circulated to all councillors on the scrutiny committee.

The Chair informed the scrutiny committee that it was likely the task group would only meet on one occasion. She had discussed the deadlines with the Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head and a suggested meeting date of Tuesday 18 October had been proposed.

The scrutiny committee was concerned that there may not be sufficient time in one meeting to give justice to the review. The Chair suggested that it might be necessary for the task group to meet prior to the meeting with the Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head and representatives from SLM.

Councillor Williams reminded councillors that the task group's comments would be reported to this scrutiny committee in November. At that point councillors may consider that further meetings were required.

The Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head advised that all councillors had an opportunity to lobby the Mayor about the re-tender process.

The Chair referred the scrutiny committee back to the list of councillors interested in taking part in the task group. It was noted that Councillor Dhindsa had put his name forward following the publication of the report. The Chair suggested that the task group should comprise a maximum of five councillors. Once the membership was agreed, she would contact the councillors and suggest a pre-meeting was arranged.

The scrutiny committee agreed the new task group should comprise the following councillors –

- Councillor Jagtar Singh Dhindsa
- Councillor Tim Williams
- Councillor Kareen Hastrick
- Councillor Keith Crout
- Councillor David Barks

RESOLVED –

1. that a new task group be established to evaluate the findings of the stakeholder engagement being carried out as part of the leisure centre management contract retender.
2. that the task group comprises the following councillors –
 - Councillor David Barks
 - Councillor Keith Crout
 - Councillor Jagtar Singh Dhindsa
 - Councillor Kareen Hastrick
 - Councillor Tim Williams

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head setting out the results of the key performance indicators for in-

house services for the first quarter of 2016/17. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head highlighted the results for some of the indicators.

Planning performance results

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the scrutiny committee that during this year the Planning Department would be reviewing its performance indicators. She asked councillors to let her know if there were any areas they would like included.

Councillor Rindl congratulated the service on their high performance and that they were consistently meeting or exceeding the target. She asked whether it would be possible to change the targets, for example reducing the number of weeks to determine applications.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that there were a number of issues that affected the service and it had not been clear if the number of applications would pick up after the recession. There were times that officers struggled to meet the target for major applications. She suggested that she could put the challenge to the Section Head and see if it was possible.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer commented that it was not clear how many applications had been received as this could have a marked effect on the results. Also as these were national indicators it might not be possible to change them due to the reporting mechanisms.

Councillor Martins, who chaired Development Management Committee, said that he felt the targets were realistic. For major applications there was often a great deal of interaction between officers, applicants, agents and other agencies outside the department and council.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head suggested that the service could be asked for further information about the results, as reported in previous years.

Housing performance results

The scrutiny committee then discussed the indicators related to Housing. Councillors raised the issue of people being placed in temporary accommodation outside the borough or asked to move out of accommodation for two days. They were concerned about assessment criteria that enabled the council to locate people outside the borough when they had work commitments or their children were at school in the borough.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head confirmed that there was a defined criteria and officers tried to keep people as local as possible. It was suggested that the scrutiny committee may wish to know how many households were located outside the borough.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head reminded councillors that the council had a statutory duty to accommodate homeless people. Once a household had been in bed and breakfast accommodation for six weeks they had to be moved to temporary accommodation. The council had acquired temporary accommodation in Harrow, which was reasonably close to Watford.

Customer services performance results

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that the service had struggled during the summer months due to the number of calls, many about voting in the referendum.

There was concern about the length of time set as a target for 'long waits'. It was felt that a target of two minutes was too long. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the council's telephone system was dated and that a new solution would be sought.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed councillors that Leadership Team had not been happy with the performance results for complaints. CS6 related to those complaints which had had no action within 10 days of receipt. During the 10 days officers could acknowledge the complaint and explain it was being processed. This would result in a positive move for the target. She advised that she would report back that the scrutiny committee felt this result was unacceptable.

RESOLVED –

1. that the performance of the identified in-house service indicators at the end of quarter 1 2016/17 (April to June) be noted.
2. that the Partnerships and Performance Section Head asks the Development Management Section Head for further information on the performance results.
3. that the actions requested be undertaken.

34 **Executive Decision Progress Report**

The Scrutiny Committee received the latest edition of the Executive Decision Progress Report for 2016/17.

RESOLVED –

that the report be noted.

35 **Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Hastrick informed the Scrutiny Committee that the county's Health Scrutiny Committee had been due to meet on Friday, 30 September. The meeting had been cancelled as the expected report was not ready.

36 **Parking Strategy Task Group - final report**

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer which included the task group's final report and Cabinet's response.

Following questions from Councillor Dhindsa, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that the full parking strategy covered the whole borough, but the first year's recommendations were concentrated on the town centre, specifically within the ring road.

Councillor Dhindsa commented that he was concerned about some of the safety aspects in the town centre, particularly in relation to drivers with blue badges and taxi passengers. He also said that any changes to parking arrangements in the town centre had an impact on the surrounding wards, especially Vicarage.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer suggested that Councillor Dhindsa should contact the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head and explain his concerns about safety for drivers in the town.

The scrutiny committee, guided by the Chair, agreed to review the task group's recommendations in six months. An item would be added to the work programme for March.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Parking Strategy Task Group's final report and Cabinet's response be noted.

2. that the Parking Strategy Task Group's recommendations be reviewed at the March meeting.

37 **Neighbourhood Forum Task Group Update**

The Chair informed the scrutiny committee that the task group had met the day before and had agreed proposed recommendations. She advised that as soon as possible she would circulate them to the scrutiny committee for information. She mentioned that one of the recommendations was suggesting an increase to each ward's budget of £500. This would give each ward a total of £3,000, equivalent to £1,000 per ward councillor.

38 **Budget Panel**

The Chair of Budget Panel, Councillor Khan provided an update of the panel's last meeting, when councillors had discussed the budget setting process for the 2017/18 budget. They had also considered that commercial opportunities may be able to be pursued in the future. He noted that the Finance Digest showed an unfavourable variance of £367,000; this was mainly due to homelessness and its impact.

39 **Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel**

The Chair of Outsourced Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Williams advised that the scrutiny panel had met the day before. The scrutiny panel had been given a tour of Watford Leisure Centre Central prior to the start of the meeting. Following this, senior managers from SLM had attended the scrutiny meeting and presented their annual report. The scrutiny panel had posed many questions which were answered by the management team and the council's client management team, including the Corporate Leisure and Community Client Section Head. In addition the scrutiny panel had received the first quarter performance information for the outsourced and shared services. Councillors had posed many questions, some were answered at the meeting and other responses would be circulated later.

Councillor Williams informed the scrutiny committee that the next meeting would be preceded by a tour of Watford Colosseum. This would then be followed by a scrutiny of HQ Theatre's annual report. The tour was open to all councillors.

40 **Community Safety Partnership Task Group**

It was noted that the first meeting of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group was not due to take place until 20 October 2016.

41 **Dates of Next Meetings**

- Thursday 27 October 2016 (for call-in only)
- Thursday 24 November 2016
- Wednesday 21 December 2016 (for call-in only)

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.35 pm