

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 November 2017

Present: Councillor K Hastrick (Chair)
Councillor Ahsan Khan (Vice-Chair)
Councillors J Dhindsa (for minute numbers 54 to 64), A Dychton,
A Grimston, Asif Khan (for minute numbers 53 to 64), R Martins,
D Walford and T Williams

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin (for minute numbers 49 to 55),
Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor (for minute numbers 49 to 59)
Mr John Hardman (for minute numbers 49 to 53)

Officers: Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications (for minute
numbers 49 to 56)
Leisure and Community Client Section Head(for minute numbers
49 to 54)
Contract Monitoring Officer(for minute numbers 49 to 54)
Watford 2020 Programme Manager(for minute numbers 49 to
55)
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

49 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no disclosures of interest.

51 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2017 were submitted and signed.

52 **Call-in**

It was noted that no executive decisions had been called in.

Future Scrutiny Topic

The Chair informed the scrutiny committee that she had been contacted by Mr John Hardman asking if the council could carry out a scrutiny on Watford Community Housing. She invited Mr Hardman to explain his reasons for the request.

Mr Hardman explained that he had considerable correspondence with Watford Community Housing and had met the group's representatives to discuss his issues. He was aware that the council had previously scrutinised the group and he had attended scrutiny meetings when councillors had put pressing questions to the organisation's representatives. He advised that he had two main concerns which were 'value for money' and the performance of companies contracted to carry out work, particularly garden maintenance and the legionella check in the tanks located in the blocks of flats.

Mr Hardman informed the scrutiny committee that the service charges had increased considerably over the last couple of years. In 2016/17 the charges were increased to 100% of costs. For the current financial year the costs had been increased by £9 per week. With regard to contractors' performance, previously he had videoed a contractor and then sent it to the group's Chief Executive. The Chief Executive had agreed that the contractor had not been carrying out inspections as required; she had apologised and advised that the tenants would not be charged that part of the service charge for that particular year. Mr Hardman explained how much the tenants were charged weekly for the legionella testing and commented that he felt this was a high figure for two inspections each year. He said that he was not convinced that the company had carried out the work during the current financial year.

Mr Hardman explained to the scrutiny committee that the Homes and Community Agency were the regulating body for social housing providers. Value for money was a key part of the regulations. He felt that Watford Community Housing was not providing 'value for money' and therefore not meeting this key regulation.

The Chair thanked Mr Hardman and opened the discussion to the scrutiny committee.

Councillors were concerned about the issues raised by Mr Hardman and were aware of issues within their own wards. There was some concern whether the council was able to carry out the scrutiny and the powers it had to make an external organisation carry out its recommendations.

The Chair confirmed that the council was able to scrutinise external organisations, however it had no power to force them to carry out any recommendations. The council was able to put forward recommendations for organisations to consider.

Councillor Asif Khan referred to the previous task group which had looked at Watford Community Housing. The Chief Executive and others in her management team had attended the scrutiny meetings and had responded to the recommendations. He was not aware of any reason the council was prevented from scrutinising the group.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised councillors that scrutiny was an 'influencing' role, particularly in respect of external organisations. She would work with the chair and Councillor Asif Khan on the scrutiny proposal form and present it at the next meeting. The task group would commence in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED –

1. that a scrutiny proposal be developed on the review of Watford Community Housing with particular focus on service charges and their value for money and the performance of the group's contractors.
2. that the scrutiny proposal be presented at the next meeting for formal approval.

54

Review of the Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework Year 1 - 2016-2017

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Head of Community and Environmental Services setting out the end of year report for the Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework.

The Contract Monitoring Officer outlined key highlights for each of the voluntary organisations and community centres.

It was noted that the Citizens Advice had difficulties in retaining some of the volunteers it trained. It was suggested that the organisation may wish to introduce some form of commitment from people it trained as volunteer assessors. This would ensure they did not leave as soon as they had completed their training.

Councillor Grimston suggested that Meriden Community Centre needed to promote itself to the local community. She felt it was not being actively promoted to the local community.

In response to a question about other groups supported by the council, for example given rent free accommodation, the Leisure and Community Section Head advised that the council was currently undertaking a piece of work looking at the council's assets and the arrangements with the current leaseholders. The review would look at the rental values and the organisations' contributions to the community. Activities would be mapped and the social value to the council would be identified. The results would be presented to a future committee.

It was noted that the funding to Watford Community Housing for the running of Leavesden Green Community Centre had ceased. The Leisure and Community Section Head explained that the group would be required to produce a business plan. Officers attended annual general meetings for the organisations; they looked at the accounts and activity programmes.

It was agreed that officers would contact the community centres to ask about their contact with local schools.

The Leisure and Community Section Head outlined his suggestion for a new task group in the next municipal year. Details of the types of questions the task group could consider had been included in the report. If the scrutiny committee was happy with the initial suggestion he would work on the proposal form. It was noted that this would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in this municipal year for formal agreement. The task group's membership would also be agreed at that point.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Community and Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework end of year report for 2016/17 be noted.
2. that the proposed draft terms of reference for a new task group be approved and a formal scrutiny proposal be presented at a future meeting for final agreement.

55

Watford 2020 Programme

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Watford 2020 Programme Manager which explained the Watford 2020 programme and its current status.

The Watford 2020 Programme Manager informed the scrutiny committee that officers would provide an update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee throughout the life of the programme. In addition a briefing had been arranged for all councillors which would look at the programme in more detail.

Following a question about the highlighted risks, the Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that the first risk score was before any mitigating actions had been put in place. He was able to confirm that risk reference PR15, 'current resource will not be sufficient for the delivery of phases 2 and 3', had been closed. The current work would be completed on time, ready for the next phase to start in the New Year.

There was some concern that moving towards the council being digital, there was an assumption that all users were digitally enabled. The Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that the vision was for the council to be digitally enabled. It was not proposed that all customer contact channels would be closed. The aim was to ensure that people would be able to do things digitally if that was how they wished to interact with the council. If a customer was unable to do something digitally then the Customer Service Assistants would do it for them.

The Head of Communication and Corporate Strategy added that an Equalities Impact Analysis would be completed to ensure the council was not restricting access to services for some members of the community. The analysis would be included in a future Cabinet report.

In response to a question from the Chair about the 'Internet of Things', the Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that this was an area being looked at by the Digital Watford Board. He advised that this was a new concept which allowed devices to talk to a network about its use, for example when a litter bin needed to be emptied. It was similar to how it was now possible for an individual to control their heating at home by an app on their smartphone.

The Watford 2020 Programme Manager informed the scrutiny committee that the Programme Board comprised Leadership Team and representatives from the programme and staff.

In response to a question as to whether the programme was transformational or aspirational, the Watford 2020 Programme Manager said that it was 'aspirationally transformative'. The programme was not looking at services in isolation but as part of the entire organisation.

Following a comment that the report did not mention the end users, the Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that currently the team was looking at the

council's current position and then potential changes for the future. There was a communications plan for the programme. The first focus was on staff and then it would be customers.

Councillor Asif Khan commented that it was important the council used technology to make things more efficient. He hoped it was not a cost cutting exercise. Technology provided an opportunity to do things in a new way. The 'Internet of Things' gave people time to do other things and be more productive.

The Watford 2020 Programme Manager informed the scrutiny committee that Digital Watford Board included representatives from Watford Community Housing and Hertfordshire County Council, enabling a wider variety of activities that may be covered by the new technology.

Councillor Watkin, whose portfolio covered the service transformation programme, congratulated the Watford 2020 Programme Manager on his work. He commented that a key point of the programme was to extend the council's services to a wider community and at a time suitable to them, not only normal office hours. There would be three levels of contact, digital, access to terminals in the Customer Service Centre with officer support as required or for officers to provide more support to those who were unable to use digital technology. He reminded councillors that the council needed to save £1 million each year in operating costs. It was necessary to be more efficient. Engagement with councillors would continue as it was important they were aware of the latest position.

RESOLVED –

that the Watford 2020 Vision and Design Principles and the Highlight Report be noted.

56

Performance Report Quarter 2 2017/18

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications which presented the latest performance report covering quarter two of 2017/18.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications informed the scrutiny committee that indicator five should read 3% and not 95% as printed in the appendix. She highlighted Housing, as the number of households in temporary accommodation was below the target of 200. This was a good reflection on the service's work with families. The top reason for homelessness was 'parental eviction' which had exceeded 'loss of private sector tenancy' for the first time since 2012/13. It was not known if the trend had changed on a permanent basis

or was temporary. She added that the council was in the process of procuring a new Customer Relationship Management System which would replace Lagan.

RESOLVED –

that the key performance indicator results for Quarter 2 2017/18 be noted.

57 Executive Decision Progress Report

The Scrutiny Committee received the latest edition of the Executive Decision Progress Report for 2017/18.

RESOLVED –

that the updated report be noted.

58 Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Hastrick provided an update on the county council's Health Scrutiny Committee. The scrutiny committee had last met on 5 October when it had looked at the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership and the National Ambulance Response Programme.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer added that following a review of the Health Scrutiny Committee at the county council, it had been suggested that all districts and boroughs within Hertfordshire needed to ensure the information was provided to all councillors. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer had agreed that in addition to the updates at Overview and Scrutiny Committee a short article would be included in the Members' Bulletin. It had been included in the October and November editions.

59 Tackling Loneliness Task Group

Councillor Mauthoor, the task group's chair, provided an update on the task group's work. On 1 December an all-day event was being held at the Town Hall to hear from organisations involved with the issue of tackling loneliness. The task group's final report was due to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January.

60 Budget Panel

Councillor Asif Khan, chair of Budget Panel, advised that the panel had not met since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was scheduled to meet on Tuesday 28 November.

61 **Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel**

Councillor Williams, chair of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel, informed the scrutiny committee that the panel had met on 2 November. It had started with a tour of the Colosseum followed a good question and answer session with the HQ Theatres. The scrutiny panel had also received a report on the New Watford Market and welcomed representatives from the parent company of Town and Country Markets. There had been a number of questions to the company.

62 **Community Safety Partnership Task Group**

Councillor Grimston, chair of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group, advised that the task group had met on 13 November. The task group welcomed representatives from Watford New Hope and the Community Mental Health Team. It had been a very interesting session.

63 **Work Programme**

The scrutiny committee received the draft work programme for 2017/18. It had been updated following the last meeting. It was agreed that the new scrutiny into Watford Community Housing would be added to the agenda for January. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer would contact the Head of Service Transformation and enquire if Overview and Scrutiny Committee could receive an item on the changes to the Customer Service Centre.

RESOLVED –

that the work programme be updated.

64 **Dates of Next Meetings**

- Wednesday 20 December 2017 (for call-in only)
- Thursday 18 January 2018
- Thursday 8 February 2018 (for call-in only)

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.40 pm