

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 March 2018

Present: Councillor K Hastrick (Chair)  
Councillor Ahsan Khan (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors J Dhindsa (for minute numbers 79 to 89), A Dychton,  
Asif Khan, R Martins and T Williams

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin (for minute numbers 76 to 80)

Officers: Head of Service Transformation (for minute numbers 76 to 80)  
Customer Service Section Head (for minute numbers 76 to 80)  
Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications (for minute  
numbers 76 to 81)  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

### 76 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Grimston.

No apologies were received from Councillor Walford.

### 77 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interests.

### 78 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2018 were submitted and signed.

### 79 **Watford 2020 Update**

The scrutiny committee received an update from the Head of Service Transformation which provided the latest progress on the Watford 2020 programme.

The Head of Service Transformation advised that a report would be presented to Cabinet in June which would bring together the service innovation work that had taken place prior to Christmas with all services. He mentioned the staff engagement event which had been held in January. Several areas were covered at the event including IT Strategy, People Strategy, Commercial Strategy, future

accommodation and ways of working and the way data and files were managed. A new customer relationship management system had been acquired to replace Lagan.

Following a question about the Commercial Strategy, the Head of Service Transformation explained that the strategy had been approved by Cabinet a few months ago. Through the service innovation work there had been many suggestions put forward for consideration. Some of the suggestions had been small extensions of the work already carried out by teams. Some of the more complex suggestions needed more consideration. It was intended to bring in a commercial adviser to support teams to carry out further reviews of the suggestions. Officers would only suggest taking forward those ideas which it was genuinely felt were viable. It was important to consider the unique selling point of suggestions.

Councillor Martins sought assurance that officers would fully test suggestions, as there were challenging times ahead and the council had to be successful. However, he felt the council should not be too risk averse.

The Head of Service Transformation explained that the commercial adviser would be able to help officers to develop ideas into commercial propositions that could be taken forward further. It was acknowledged that there may be some propositions that were taken forward that might fail. The aim was to maximise opportunity.

In response to Councillor Williams question about the £1 million target for savings from the project, the Head of Service Transformation advised that through the service innovation work over 310 ideas had been suggested. The ideas were being developed into an operating model. He was confident that opportunities to deliver the £1 million savings had been identified and that they could be achieved by 1 April 2020, the deadline.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service Transformation for attending the meeting and providing the update.

RESOLVED –

that the Watford 2020 update be noted.

80

### **Customer Service Centre Refurbishment**

The scrutiny committee received a report from the Customer Service Section Head, who also gave a presentation at the meeting. She highlighted the background to the Customer Service Centre and the changes made during the

recent refurbishment. She advised the changes had been made to reflect the needs of both the customer and the organisation. The aim was to improve service delivery and encourage access to self-serve via telephone and online. Officers were available to assist those who were unable to complete online enquiries or needed some assistance to get started. The customer waiting area had been moved; this ensured there was more space and people were not overlooking those at the desks.

Following a question about the children's play space that used to be in the customer service centre, the Customer Service Section Head confirmed this was being reviewed and a potential space had been identified. However, it was necessary to be mindful of the fact that some of the space would disappear when the redevelopment of the amenities area started.

The Customer Service Section Head informed councillors that customer satisfaction had increased as the new streams of interaction with the council had been introduced.

Officers were aware that this was an ongoing process and continually ensured they were making the best use of the space. The customer feedback helped identify potential training needs for officers or changes to processes. There were regular service team meetings when officers were able to put forward ideas and be involved in developing improvements. The Improvement Team included some of those who had reservations about the new format.

In response to a question from the chair about officers' reactions to the changes, the Customer Service Section Head said that most were positive. There were some initial concerns when the large desk was first removed. The Qmatic system had helped some customers to be able to help themselves, by self-registering. This had helped to reduce queues.

Following a question from Councillor Williams about some of the more challenging customers officers might encounter in the Customer Service Centre, the Customer Service Section Head advised that there was not a big problem with abusive customers. Mostly this arose when there were tensions. There were procedures in place if any problems did arise. Plus with the new 'pod' arrangement officers were not trapped behind a desk, there was a direct link to the Facilities team and the Police if necessary. The area was also covered by CCTV.

Councillor Watkin, whose portfolio covered the Customer Service Centre, commented that staff had been on a huge journey. It was very different to the traditional arrangement. He complimented the Customer Service Section Head

and her team on their work. The new arrangements enabled people to come in and do the things they needed to do without waiting a long time.

The chair thanked the Customer Service Section Head for attending the meeting and providing the scrutiny committee with the update on the refurbishment and answering the councillors' questions.

Councillor Martins welcomed the new layout. He asked for assurance that staff were able to manage the more challenging situations. For example, mental health issues were generally recognised to be increasing.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications assured the scrutiny committee that officers received training on ways to deal with difficult and challenging customers. Facilities officers were available to support staff as required. There had been discussions about putting up posters asking customers to treat staff with respect, but it had been decided not to put them up as the posters could create more tension.

The scrutiny committee agreed to further review the Customer Service Centre in a year.

RESOLVED –

that a further review be carried out in a year.

81

### **End of Quarter 3 (October - December 2017) 2017/18 Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report**

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications, which set out the results of the key performance indicators for in-house services for the third quarter of 2017/18.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications responded to questions about specific indicators. In response to the result for the 'long wait calls received to CSC', she advised that she would ask the Section Head for any reasons for the delays. The below target result for 'complaints resolved at stage one' would be raised at Leadership Team. Some complaints could be challenging to resolve in the allocated response time. In relation to the results for the two indicators about households in temporary accommodation, it was noted the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April and it would be necessary to see how this affected the housing indicators. The pilots which had been carried out around the country showed on average an increase in caseloads by 25%.

Councillor Asif Khan referred to the recent statistics about child poverty. The poverty rate in Leggatts was the highest of any of the wards in Watford. Generally politicians wanted to eliminate poverty. It was necessary to work together to drive the statistics down.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications said that she was aware of the report from End Child Poverty. During 2018/19 officers would be reviewing the indicators and considering new ones. They would consider what it was necessary to know about and what was important.

Councillor Khan said that the statistics showed the wards were very different but it would be necessary to find out what caused these differences.

Councillor Martins added that it was useful to have the information but it was frustrating knowing there was a problem but not who could resolve it, whether it was something Watford Borough Council could work on or if pressure needed to be put on the county council or government.

RESOLVED –

that the results of the key performance indicators for Quarter 3 2017/18 be noted.

## 82 **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.

## 83 **Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Hastrick informed the scrutiny committee that the next Health Scrutiny Committee was due to meet on 15 March 2018. It would be scrutinising health providers' quality accounts. She was a member of the group scrutinising West Herts Hospitals Trust and would be chairing the group reviewing the East of England Ambulance Service.

## 84 **Tackling Loneliness Task Group - Cabinet response**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the scrutiny committee that Cabinet had considered the recommendations from the Tackling Loneliness Task

Group earlier that week. The minutes were not yet available but would be circulated as soon as possible. She advised that it appeared the recommendations had generally been well received and accepted.

The scrutiny committee agreed to review the recommendations in six months time. It was also suggested that a letter be sent to Councillor Mauthoor to officially thank her for her commitment and work on the task group.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Tackling Loneliness Task Group's recommendations be reviewed in September.
2. that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee writes to Councillor Mauthoor for her work and commitment to the Tackling Loneliness Task Group.

#### 85 **Scrutiny proposal - Watford Community Housing**

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out a proposal to scrutinise Watford Community Housing. The proposal had been suggested jointly by Councillors Kareen Hastrick and Asif Khan.

Councillor Asif Khan commented that the task group would act as a 'critical friend' to the organisation. The aim was to help service improvements for borough residents.

RESOLVED –

that a new task group be set up in the new municipal year to scrutinise Watford Community Housing as set out in the proposal.

#### 86 **Budget Panel**

It was noted that Budget Panel had not met since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Asif Khan, chair of the panel, advised that its next meeting was on 14 March and councillors would be looking at commercialisation.

#### 87 **Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel**

Councillor Williams, chair of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel, informed the scrutiny committee that the panel had met on 21 February 2018. The scrutiny panel had received a presentation from Revenues and Benefits. Councillors had

posed some good questions to the officers about the service. It had been suggested that the subject should be covered in the new members' induction programme.

**88 Community Safety Partnership Task Group**

It was noted that Community Safety Partnership Task Group had not met since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**89 Dates of Next Meetings**

- Thursday 22 March 2018 (for call-in only)

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 8.05 pm