

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 November 2019

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chair)
Councillor J Dhindsa (Vice-Chair)
Councillors D Allen-Williamson, R Martins, B Mauthoor, M Mills,
M Parker and G Saffery

Also present: Councillor Collett, Portfolio Holder for Community
Jo Ditch (HQ Theatres, Venue Director – for minute numbers
46 to 51)
Gary Foley (Contract Manager, SLM – for minute numbers 46
to 52)
Alvin Hargreaves (Chief Operating Officer at HQ Theatres &
Hospitality Limited – for minute numbers 46 to 51)
Karl Miles (Area Contract Manager, SLM – for minute
numbers 46 to 52)
Kelly Spencer (General Manager, SLM – for minute numbers
46 to 52)

Officers: Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications (for
minute numbers 46 to 53)
Head of Leisure and Environmental Services (for minute
numbers 46 to 52)
Contract & Partnership Manager – Leisure & Community
Services (for minute numbers 46 to 52)
Sports Development Officer (for minute number 46 to 52)
Senior Democratic Services Officer

46 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

Apologies were received from Councillor Stiff.

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Mills replaced Councillor Turmaine.

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

There were no disclosures of interest.

48 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2019 were submitted and signed.

49 **Other scrutiny meetings - minutes**

The scrutiny committee noted the minutes of the Watford Colosseum Task Group, which had taken place on 14 October 2019. The task group's final report and recommendations would be considered at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 December.

50 **Call-in**

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

51 **HQ Theatres - end of year 8**

Prior to considering the report from HQ Theatres, the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services brought the scrutiny committee up to date with the recent closure of the Colosseum, arising from potential issues with the ceiling in the main auditorium identified during a regular inspection. Structural engineers were due to carry out a further inspection during the week commencing 2 December 2019. This had resulted in the postponement and cancellation of some events. Inspections were being carried out to assess the extent of the problem and an update would be provided to members thereafter. HQ Theatres had been in contact with customers and event organisers to reschedule events wherever possible. Refunds were also being offered.

The Head of Leisure and Environmental Services agreed to provide the scrutiny committee with information regarding the respective parties responsibilities for repair and maintenance costs in the existing contract and lease, which was due to expire in March 2021. Early work to define the future requirements and potential partnership options for the venue had been undertaken by the Watford Colosseum Task Group. Its report and recommendations would be discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December.

Returning to the main discussion item, the committee received the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services enclosing the annual report from HQ Theatres. This provided information on the performance of the Watford Colosseum Management Contract during Year 8 (September 2018 – August 2019). The Venue Director, Jo Ditch, introduced HQ Theatre's annual report which summarised activities over the past year, including a review of performance against the indicators agreed with the council.

There followed a discussion about the number of compliments and complaints from visitors to the venue. Alvin Hargreaves, Chief Operating Officer at HQ Theatres, explained that the figures, as a proportion of overall feedback and against a total of 70,000 attendees in the last year, were not deemed high. However, responses provided useful feedback and had enabled positive changes and innovations to be introduced to meet criticism e.g., pop up bars to counter slow service during popular events.

In response to a question about HQ Theatre's monitoring data, the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services advised that questions regarding disability, gender, ethnicity etc. were optional and not all employees provided this information. As such, relevant data sets were incomplete and could not therefore be judged to be representative.

Scrutiny committee members reviewed the management fee of £176,060 provided to HQ Theatres to operate the venue and questioned whether this represented value for money for the council. Alvin Hargreaves outlined the profit share arrangement in place which ensured that the council had received £34,503 for contract year 8 (compared to £19,973 in the previous year). This represented the highest profit share contribution to date. Attention was also drawn to the positive impact of Watford Colosseum on the local economy through its activities and events. Using Arts Council England methodology, this was calculated to have been more than £1.8 million in 2018-19.

Following a discussion about community hire figures over the past year, it was agreed that HQ Theatres would provide further information to the scrutiny committee about the types of events which had been booked. This would include details about proposed events, which had subsequently been cancelled possibly due to problems arranging visas for performers. It was noted that future options for community hire had been explored by the Watford Colosseum Task Group.

Reflecting council priorities, Jo Ditch and Alvin Hargreaves briefly outlined the steps HQ Theatres had taken to encourage wellness amongst staff, to improve accessibility at the venue and to promote Watford Colosseum as a dementia friendly facility.

RESOLVED –

that the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be noted.

Action: Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and HQ Theatres

Leisure Centre Contract - SLM - end of year 1

The committee received a report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services, reviewing the Leisure Centre Management Contract (LCMC) year 1, 2018-19.

SLM Contract Manager, Gary Foley, provided an overview of the outcomes, initiatives and projects delivered through LCMC during year 1 (June 2018 – June 2019) of the new 15 year contract with Watford Borough Council.

The scrutiny committee welcomed the performance of the LCMC during its first year, including the management of the Cassiobury paddling pools and splash pads. These showed improved attendance, membership, engagement and customer satisfaction.

Reviewing the report in more detail, the scrutiny committee sought further information about SLM's cleaning regime following complaints about cleanliness at the central leisure centre swimming pool. This had been particularly acute following the removal of the blue overshoes.

Clarification was also sought on SLM's efforts to engage young people to participate in sporting activities. Following an explanation about the work which had been undertaken by SLM with individual schools on a month-by-month basis, the scrutiny committee requested a list of the schools previously targeted in order to help prioritise future activity.

It was suggested that SLM might also consider providing transportation for people otherwise unable to access its facilities.

RESOLVED –

that the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be noted.

Action: Contracts and Partnership Manager – Leisure and Community and Head of Leisure and Environmental Services

End of Q2 2019/20 Key Performance Indicators

The scrutiny committee received the report of the Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications setting out the results for the key performance indicators at the end of Quarter 2 2019/20.

It was noted that the results for Revenues and Benefits had not been available at the time of publication. Some of this data had since been provided and copies

were tabled at the meeting. Committee members were disappointed that there was insufficient analysis of the performance in this service and it was agreed to invite the Head of Revenues and Benefits to attend the committee in February 2020.

During discussions with the Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications, the following changes to the council's performance targets were suggested:

- Housing targets should be more stretching in 2020/21
- Temporary accommodation statistics should be broken down to include information on its type e.g., bed and breakfast accommodation, and location – it was noted that more detailed information was provided to Housing Policy Advisory Group members
- Leisure centre targets should be increased in 2020/21
- Information should be provided on the process for challenging car parking penalties and on the costs – and allocation of these costs – associated with dispute tribunals.

RESOLVED –

that the key performance indicator results for Quarter 2 2019/20 be noted.

Action: Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications

54 **Executive Decision Progress Report**

The scrutiny committee received the 2019/20 Executive Decision Progress Report. It was noted that since publication two decisions, on the council's safeguarding and domestic abuse policies, had been deferred until February 2020.

RESOLVED –

that the 2019/20 Executive Decision Progress report be noted.

55 **New scrutiny task group - health services for deaf people**

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer setting out a proposal for a new scrutiny task group. Five councillors had now put their names forward to participate in the task group, however this did not include members from the opposition group. Two councillors had expressed an interest to chair the task group.

Councillor Collett, Portfolio Holder for Community, set out the importance of the task group's work, which would seek to tackle the problems faced by deaf people trying to access local health services.

RESOLVED –

1. that a new task group be established to review health services for deaf people
2. that the Health Services for Deaf People Task Group should comprise Councillors Bolton, Dychton, Grimston, Saffery and Wenham
3. that Councillor Saffery be appointed Chair of the Health Services for Deaf People Task Group.

Action: Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

It was noted that a link to the papers for the last Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee on 16 October had been circulated to the committee in the actions update from the last meeting in October.

Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee would next meet on 17 December and the Chair agreed to provide a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 December.

57 **Work Programme**

The scrutiny committee received the updated draft of its work programme, incorporating the suggestions from the previous meetings. It was agreed that the Head of Revenues and Benefits should be invited to attend the meeting on 27 February 2020.

RESOLVED –

that the work programme be updated as discussed during the meeting.

Action: Senior Democratic Services Officer

58 **Dates of Next Meetings**

- Thursday 19 December 2019

- Thursday 23 February 2020 (for call-in only)
- Thursday 6 February 2020

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 9.00 pm