

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 June 2021

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chair)
Councillor J Dhindsa (Vice-Chair)
Councillors S Feldman, P Hannon, T Osborn, M Parker, G Saffery
and M Turmaine

Also present: Helen Brown, Deputy Chief Executive – West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Louise Halfpenny, Director of Communications – West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Officers: Executive Head of Human Resources
Head of Programme Management Office
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Group Head of Transformation

1 Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership

Apologies were received from Councillor Stanton.

2 Disclosure of interests (if any)

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 were submitted and signed.

4 West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust's redevelopment plans

The scrutiny committee received a presentation from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust's (WHHT) redevelopment plans across three sites: Watford General Hospital, Hemel Hempstead Hospital and St Albans City Hospital. Copies of the presentation had been sent to members in advance of the meeting. It was agreed to resend the slightly updated version used by the presenters.

During questions following the presentation, the following points were discussed:

- Relocation of Mount Vernon cancer centre to Watford – members noted that most planned cancer care would take place at St Albans hospital. Patient outcomes were often worse where people were moved between hospital sites and it was questioned whether this fact would impact on the relocation plans. Helen Brown advised that cancer pathways were complex, but in most cases patients were likely to go to St Albans hospital for the majority of their treatment. More complex cases would be seen at Watford General Hospital or another specialist cancer centre.
- Reluctance of people to travel to Watford from St Albans and Hemel Hempstead and whether this would be assisted by a dedicated bus service between the three hospital sites. Helen Brown explained the background to the decision to retain the three site hospital configuration. Organisation was key alongside clarity on the services being provided at the various locations. Emergency care, specialist diagnostics and in patient care at Watford General Hospital would affect relatively few patients and the majority of care would therefore take place closer to where people lived in the areas around Hemel Hempstead and St Albans. There were no plans to provide a bus service connecting the three hospital sites due to costs and the unlikelihood of its need since patients would not be moving routinely between hospitals. A travel steering group with representatives from Hertfordshire County Council, district authorities and the Trust would be looking at travel issues in more detail. Patients and patient representative groups would be consulted.
- Ability to be involved in the on-going consultation – members were advised that the next round of questions posted on the website would be succinct and wide views on patient experience were strongly welcomed.
- Timings of the building projects – Louise Halfpenny underlined the on-going extent of investment in the hospital buildings and services despite their shabby external appearance. The scale of investment planned was huge and final confirmation of the funding was awaited from the Treasury. WHHT was one of eight pathfinder trusts at the forefront of the hospital building programme. It was hoped the redevelopment would be completed during 2023.

The Chair thanked Helen Brown and Louise Halfpenny for their presentation and invited members to submit any further questions to the Senior Democratic Services Officer to forward to the Trust for a response.

RESOLVED –

that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the presentation from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

Strategic Framework Quarterly Update

The scrutiny committee received the report of the Executive Head of Strategy and Communications and Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office setting out progress on the council's strategic framework comprising the Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020-22; the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and Delivery Plan; and Covid-19 Road to Renewal Plan. Progress had last been scrutinised by members at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 February 2021.

The Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office and Executive Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development discussed the different strands of the framework and responded to members' questions. During discussions the following points were raised and, where relevant, additional information sought:

- Dementia Admiral Nurses were working with the council's community protection team to provide support and signposting to patients and their carers to available assistance.
- Woodside sports complex: further information was sought on the plans for organisations, including the Velmurugan Trust, if they were displaced as a consequence of the Woodside redevelopment plans.
- Hospital car park: whether the council maintained some control over out-of-hours usage for the benefit of local residents experiencing parking pressures in surrounding roads. This point had been raised at Major Projects Forum; the majority of spaces were allocated to hospital staff and visitors, however there might be an opportunity for some spaces to be made available to residents. This question would be put to the Riverwell project team.
- Ensuring all parts of the town felt involved in the Council Plan: it was stressed that the Council Plan was for the whole borough. Behind the work stream headlines there were a range of activities which variously impacted the town's different wards. In addition, there were a number of borough-wide initiatives.
- Ensuring that the Council Plan stayed on track: the Delivery Plan used a comprehensive system of tracking and reporting to ensure that progress against the different work streams was monitored effectively. This work was the responsibility of the Enterprise Programme Management Office which provided regular reports, including to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Delivery Plan intentionally ended in 2022 to enable a reassessment of the Council Plan against delivery.
- Checks on staff wellbeing during the Covid pandemic: this issue was taken extremely seriously by the council led by the Managing Director. Line managers maintained regular contact with their teams to monitor

wellbeing and ensure workloads were manageable and adequate breaks taken. A number of anonymous surveys had been undertaken to get direct feedback from staff and to assess home office needs. In addition, the council's intranet had developed a series of pages dedicated to staff health and wellbeing, signposting readers to specialist help, support and good practice. Initiatives such as Time to Talk conversations between staff had also been used to support staff working remotely.

- Appetite of staff to return to the town hall: a series of surveys had been undertaken to understand staff working preferences. The vast majority supported a hybrid approach. There were no plans for an immediate return to the town hall. Individual teams would be devising agile working charters over the summer tailored to their different requirements and working practices. The corporate view was that there were times when people needed to be in the office but this would vary between teams. Specialist care was available to anyone with a real fear of returning to the town hall.
- Staff productivity during the pandemic: it was agreed to research whether there were any comparative measures of staff productivity before and during the pandemic that could be reported.
- Engagement with the unions around changes to council policies: it was confirmed that unions were consulted on all policies which were being significantly reviewed. Wider feedback was taken on board wherever possible. Good working relations with the unions had been particularly supported by the Managing Director and regular meetings were being set up.
- Staff exit interviews: all staff leavers were offered an exit interview with their line manager or a representative from HR. Alternatively they could complete an online form, anonymously as required. This information was used by HR to discern trends or concerns with particular services.
- Recognition of staff: staff were given regular thanks and feedback for their hard work during the pandemic. Individuals going above and beyond their normal roles had received special recognition, *inter alia* one-off honorarium payments. All staff had been given an extra day's leave in the previous year, Christmas hampers and gift vouchers. Staff also appreciated thank you letters from the Mayor and MD.
- Monitoring the success of the WENTA offer to businesses: it was agreed to return to members with some data to understand how well local companies had engaged with the business support offering.
- Reskilling training: the importance of addressing the impacts of the pandemic on individuals as well as businesses had been recognised in the council's economic growth strategy, approved by Cabinet in June. The council was working closely with the LEP to look at the impacts on different age groups.

RESOLVED –

that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes:

1. The progress updates within the report relating to:
 - the Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020 -22 (Appendix A);
 - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B);
and
 - the Road to Renewal Plan (Appendix C).
2. As outlined in the original report to Cabinet (and then subsequently Overview and Scrutiny Committee) in July 2020, that the progress to date be communicated publically to our residents, with the proposal to do this in September 2021
3. The significant corporate effort over the last three months that has resulted in a substantial level of progress made against all three plans.
4. The impact of external factors on some of the areas of delivery. Where this is the case, the areas have been reviewed to reflect the current environment during Quarter 4. The focus on delivery within the life of the plans remains a corporate commitment.
5. The Road to Renewal plan will adapt to best serve residents and businesses as the Covid-19 incident continues and develops. As confirmed as part of the last update to Cabinet, a review and refresh of the existing plan has been undertaken to ensure that it is responding to the impact of the pandemic and the arising needs of residents and businesses. This will be presented to Cabinet in September 2021.

Action: Executive Head of Strategy and Communications and Executive Head of HR & Organisational Development

6

Work Programme

Members were invited to review Overview and Scrutiny Committee's draft work programme for 2021/22.

Introducing the item, the Chair commented that the forward work programme was a standing item on all Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas. It provided an outline, but it was for the members to direct the focus of the committee's investigations and establish the outcomes they wished to achieve.

It was noted that the work programme was flexible and issues could be added, removed and rescheduled during the course of the year.

Scrutiny members were asked to submit any suggestions for the work programme to the Senior Democratic Services Officer or use the relevant form on the staff portal.

RESOLVED –

that the Chair work with officers to incorporate members' suggestions into the 2021/22 work programme.

Action: Senior Democratic Services Officer

7

Executive Decision Progress Report

The scrutiny committee was invited to review the current Executive Decision Progress Report for 2021-22 and consider whether any further information was required.

RESOLVED –

that the current 2021/22 Executive Decision Progress report be noted.

8

Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee

The Chair, as the council's appointed representative on Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, noted that the last meeting on 7 June had been cancelled. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 7 July 2021 and an update on its activities would be provided at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 July.

9

Date of Next Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 22 July.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.50 pm