

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 October 2021

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

Also present: Councillor Ian Stotesbury, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Transport

Officers: Executive Head of Strategy and Communications  
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services  
Group Head of Transformation  
Head of Leisure and Environmental Services  
Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office  
Partnerships and Funding Manager  
Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Parker.

There was a change of membership for this meeting; Councillor Bell replaced Councillor Turmaine.

Councillor Stanton was absent without apologies.

The Executive Head of HR and OD had also sent his apologies.

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

The Chair advised that she was currently volunteering with the Chamber of Commerce on their kick-starter apprentice scheme, which was referred to in the Strategic Framework report.

### 33 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were submitted and signed.

## Strategic Framework Update - Q2 2021/22

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 and the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24.

The Head of Enterprise Programme Management made a presentation to the committee highlighting key areas of progress.

The committee asked about how the staff surveys were carried out. These were undertaken regularly and particularly since the onset of Covid. Other means of consulting with staff included the appraisal system, the Staff Ambassador Group and the union who would be meeting regularly with the Managing Director. Members asked to receive an update on the motivation and satisfaction KPIs with a comparison over the last five years.

The committee also asked for information about how success was being measured in the Staying Connected project which was a piece of work being undertaken with W3RT.

Members referred to the cultural leaders group and asked about the membership. This had been temporarily replaced by the Watford Together project. It was noted that Watford's community was diverse and representatives of smaller organisations were not always available during the day. Future membership was under discussion and would be made available to the committee in due course.

Turning to the green waste charges, officers confirmed that the subscription to the service was automatically renewed for those who paid by direct debit and other customers were invited to renew by letter.

Referring to the recent consultation on the Sustainable Transport Strategy, the committee were reassured that it had been a very extensive exercise encompassing individuals, focus groups and organisations. Young people had been reached through schools and colleges and there had been more than 1000 responses. Officers undertook to send more information about how the consultation had been carried out.

Discussing the River Colne programme, it was confirmed that it was a ten year project with various phases. A members' briefing was scheduled for November.

RESOLVED –

that the scrutiny committee notes:

1. The progress updates within this report relating to:
  - the Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020 -22 (Appendix A)
  - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B) 3.2
2. As outlined in the original report to Cabinet and the Committee in July 2020, that the progress to date will be communicated publically to our residents.
3. The significant corporate effort over the last three months that has resulted in a substantial level of progress made against the 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 1. The focus on delivery within the life of the plans remains a corporate commitment.

Action: Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office, Business Intelligence Manager, Group Head of Strategy and Communications

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### **Road to Renewal Refresh**

The scrutiny committee received the report of the Head of the Enterprise Programme Management Office setting out the refreshed Road to Renewal plan.

The Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office introduced the report advising that it replaced the first iteration of the plan which was approved by Cabinet in July 2020. It was noted that significant progress had been made against the plan over the past 18 months in challenging circumstances but that the Covid pandemic had changed considerably since the plan was first approved. This refreshed plan provided an opportunity to realign the council's renewal activities with work undertaken collaboratively with the County Council, other district and borough councils, Hertfordshire LEP and the Hertfordshire Growth Board, as well as ensuring that it met the existing challenges presented by the pandemic to residents, businesses and communities.

The Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office provided an overview of key areas to the committee. Members were invited to ask any questions.

Further information was sought about the piece of work assisting organisations which did not have a physical office space. Officers explained that this was an ongoing exercise which would map requirements against space available. The

Chair of a recent task group on the voluntary sector considered colocation as a potential benefit.

Officers further undertook to check whether the council had any outstanding bids in with the LEP.

RESOLVED –

that the scrutiny committee notes:

1. the Road to Renewal Plan work stream objectives outlined in this report.
2. the Road to Renewal delivery actions (Appendix 1)
3. Progress on delivering the Road to Renewal delivery actions will continue to be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Action: Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office

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### **Review of the Bike Hire Scheme (Sustainable Transport Contracts) Year 1 (2020 - 2021)**

The committee received a report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services providing information on the performance of the Bike Hire scheme as part of the sustainable transport programme during Year 1 (March 2020 - March 2021).

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Transport welcomed the committee's invitation and summarised that the scheme was a success. There had been just under 150,000 journeys and over 500,000km travelled by 19,000 users.

The Group Head of Community and Environmental Services introduced the report noting that it was an important scheme which had been well received and well used. He highlighted that 15% of the journeys had replaced the use of a car, van or motorbike. Engagement with the operator remained positive, with new bike stands being introduced to prevent the issue of bikes falling over. The redistribution of bikes remained under close review and it had been a successful scheme.

The committee discussed the costs of the scheme for the council, with some members asking why there was no income for the council and others of the view that it was a sound investment. There was currently a subsidy in place and Beryl Bikes sent a monthly invoice based on the number of rides. The intention was for the subsidy to be phased out over the first four years of the scheme by which

time it should be self-sufficient. This was based on projected ridership figures. The council had also made a capital investment of approximately £450,000 for bikes and bays. While the council drew no financial benefit from the scheme, the strategic decision had been made that it provided an accessible and sustainable means of transport for Watford. The council's subsidy would end after four years and the contract followed an extensive procurement exercise.

The Portfolio Holder underlined the strategic aims of the scheme and also highlighted the forthcoming Sustainable Transport Strategy which looked to address congestion.

Turning to the branding of the bikes, members asked why Watford Council logos were not part of the scheme. The bikes carried Beryl branding and a sponsorship deal with Camelot was also in place. It was suggested that the council could look to increase the branding on the bikes and the app. Officers agreed to check whether the amount of the sponsorship could be disclosed.

It was noted that each bike had an individual tether which could look cluttered, officers agreed to take this feedback into consideration. The Portfolio Holder added that the design of bays was under review with more tier 3 bays a possibility.

Turning to how the schemes operated elsewhere, the committee was advised that best practice in other areas was an important learning area. The redistribution of bikes following the increase in commuter use was a challenging issue under consideration.

In response to a question about e-scooters, the Portfolio Holder advised that he had no desire to pursue a similar scheme for Watford. Making Watford very cycle-friendly was a priority. There were, however, ongoing conversations about cargo bikes for local businesses.

Officers noted that while conversations were ongoing with landlords of private land, such as supermarkets, it was easiest to locate stands on the highway working with Hertfordshire County Council and TfL.

The committee discussed the works on Clarendon Road and whether it could have included a cycle lane. It was noted that this topic had been discussed with bike user groups but other routes into the town centre had been identified.

There were a series of promotional activities planned around COP 26, Christmas and New Year resolutions to highlight the scheme.

RESOLVED –

that the report be noted.

**37 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.

It was noted that two dates had been changed since the publication of the agenda:

- The Community and Operational Property Management Framework would now go to the Cabinet meeting on 6 December.
- The Herts CC Agency Agreement for Trees and Verges Maintenance would now go to the Cabinet meeting on 6 December.

RESOLVED –

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

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

The council's representative on the Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Grimston, advised that she had recently raised a concern about the level of information available for those suffering serious mental health issues. The CCG had agreed to review the information on their website.

She further drew the committee's attention to the vaccination information which had been circulated. Residents needed to be encouraged to take up their Covid and flu vaccinations.

She reported that the scrutiny task group's report on health services for the deaf would be considered at the committee meeting in December. She would be pushing for all the recommendations to be implemented.

Councillor Bell also reported that he had been part of a scrutiny on GP access. The other significant issue was the delays experienced by patients waiting for an ambulance.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

**39 New scrutiny task group - Sustainable Transport Strategy**

The committee received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer setting out a proposal for a new task group to consider the sustainable transport strategy.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report advising that there had been six volunteers for the task group.

The committee discussed the membership and agreed that cross-party representation was valuable. There were no other nominations to chair the task group.

RESOLVED –

1. That a scrutiny task group be established to review the sustainable transport strategy.
2. That the membership of the task group be as follows:
  - Councillor Amanda Grimston (Chair)
  - Councillor Glen Saffery
  - Councillor Tom Osborn
  - Councillor Simon Feldman
  - Councillor Dennis Watling.

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### **Work Programme**

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

Members noted that data in relation to the ArrivaClick service had been provided in response to a written question to Council. The Portfolio Holder advised a leaflet would shortly be issued to members.

RESOLVED –

that the 2021/22 work programme be noted and updated according to discussions.

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### **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 18 November.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.05 pm  
and finished at 8.30 pm