

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 September 2022

Present: Councillor Osborn (Chair)
Councillor F Ezeifedi (Vice-Chair)
Councillors N Bell, P Jeffree, P Kloss, R Martins, T Osborn and
K Rodrigues

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin (minute numbers 19 to 23)

Officers: Executive Head of Strategy and Initiatives (Communications,
Partnerships and Community)
Executive Head of Human Resources
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Business Intelligence Manager

19 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

There were two changes of membership for this meeting; Councillor Bell replaced Councillor Turmaine and Councillor Jeffree replaced Councillor Stiff.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Ahmed and Councillor Feldman.

In the absence of the Chair, it had been agreed that Councillor Osborn would chair the meeting.

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

There were no disclosures of interest.

21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022 were submitted and signed.

22 **Other scrutiny meetings - minutes**

It was noted that Finance Scrutiny Committee had met on 14 September 2022. Minutes of the meeting would be available on the council's website.

A question was raised from the agenda for that meeting around the assumptions made in the budget and the current level of inflation. The committee asked whether specific modelling had been done in relation to salaries and whether this was discussed at the meeting.

The pay award in the Medium Term Financial Strategy was set at 2% which was in line with other authorities. There was a pay offer of 4-5% under negotiation with the unions. Scenarios were being considered around where savings might be required and modelling was being undertaken for the capital programmes.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that a significant review was underway and that the budget was updated quarterly and would go back to Finance Scrutiny Committee. It was critical to protect services and the economic impact reserve might be used. No updates from government were expected before the budget in November.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

23 **Strategic Framework and Performance Update**

The scrutiny committee received the report of the Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Service, the Executive Head of Human Resources and the Business Intelligence Manager.

The Business Intelligence Manager introduced the aspect of the report relating to the key performance indicators (KPIs). Following discussions at the last meeting she reported that the process to review KPIs with senior officers was underway.

The Business Intelligence Manager discussed the highlights identified in her report.

During discussions on the report, members raised the following points requesting additional information where relevant:

- Response time to freedom of information requests remained below target. Many of these were from the commercial and media sectors, rather than residents, and some required cross-departmental input which could be time-consuming. Senior officers could now see performance levels for their services on the performance management system. Members requested more information around themes, benchmarking, and the impact of missing the response targets.

- The levels of Penalty Charge Notices remained consistent at around 2500 per month. Officers would confirm whether those relating to the bus gates were included in the graphs.
- The revised waste and recycling targets had been met; there was some concern that they were not sufficiently challenging. Members asked for information about when the target would be reviewed.
- The committee wanted to know which areas of the town were surveyed for Q1 for detritus and graffiti and whether these areas came under the remit of Hertfordshire County Council's highways service.
- Throughput at Watford Woodside Leisure Centre had decreased on Q1 21/22; a number of large events did not take place this year and there was a reduction in attendance at group exercise classes. It was noted that there were now financial penalties for failing to attend a booked class and this might be discouraging participation. Officers undertook to report back.
- The climbing wall at Watford Central Leisure Centre remained closed; more information was requested about the long-term plans.
- While staff sickness remained low; it had increased on Q1 21/22. While levels of stress and anxiety had increased, WBC was a small organisation and so the data was easily impacted.

The Portfolio Holder commented that there could be opportunities to look at Qlik, the data and analytics tool, to consider how to use the KPIs to maintain delivery. He posed the question of whether a smaller number of more focused indicators would be better. It was noted that some councils had a tolerance of up to 10% which WBC captured in the commentary. Committee members were asked to send any ideas they had.

The Executive Head of Strategy and Initiatives introduced the aspect of the report relating to the Council Plan, Delivery Plan and Organisational Development Strategy.

She set out the highlights of the report to the committee.

Members discussed the following areas, with actions recorded as requested:

- Work was ongoing on the Watford to Croxley Link (previously known as the MLX corridor), officers would report back on the timeline of the procurement exercise.
- An ambitious bid had been made to the Levelling Up Fund of £16 million which would have a significant impact on the Town Hall Quarter Programme; the outcome was anticipated in November.

- A number of Market Lates events had taken place; the committee considered that holding them more regularly could boost attendance. Further details of the footfall and other feedback was requested.
- The Big Events had almost finished for the year; there had been high numbers for the Big Screen. An extended run of four weeks of the Big Beach had taken place but numbers had slowed. Feedback was given that residents had asked why the Big Screen had not returned to KGV park.
- Some major projects were being considered for Woodside Leisure Centre with the private sector.
- There was a plan to plant 20,000 trees by 2026; officers undertook to determine if this was on track, whether there was an annual target and where trees had been planted. Members suggested that community groups should be given more opportunities to participate in the project.
- There had been some delays with Watford Business Park; an update was requested on whether the consent had been received from the Environment Agency.
- The response to the cost of living crisis was being led by the Executive Head of Strategy & Initiatives (Communications, Partnerships & Community) bringing together key stakeholders including the DWP and the Money Advice Unit at Hertfordshire County Council. One focus was ensuring communications reached those who were eligible for additional support. A Warm Places initiative was also being drawn up so that there were locations available for those who struggled to heat their homes.
- The response rate to the staff diversity questionnaire was not high enough; this was the subject of a review and a higher response rate would be encouraged by the new senior leadership team.
- The electric car club procurement was ongoing and the committee would be provided with an update.

RESOLVED –

that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes:

1. the progress updates within this report relating to:
 - the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022 -24
 - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24
 - the key performance indicator results for 2020/23

2. that the key performance indicators and measures will continue to be reviewed as part of the council-wide service planning process and the ongoing work on the Business Intelligence Strategy.

24 **Sustainability Strategy Task Group membership**

The scrutiny committee received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer asking the committee to appoint a new Chair for the task group.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report. Councillor Stiff had previously been appointed as the Chair by Overview and Scrutiny Committee but she was no longer able to participate. The committee was asked to appoint a new chair and was invited to make a further nomination to the task group, should an additional councillor wish to participate.

RESOLVED –

that the decision be deferred to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 October to allow further discussions to take place.

25 **Executive Decision Progress Report**

The scrutiny committee was invited to review the current Executive Decision Progress Report for 2022/23 and consider whether any further information was required.

RESOLVED –

that the current 2022/23 Executive Decision Progress report be noted.

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

The scrutiny committee noted that the Health Scrutiny Committee had not met since the previous meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 12 October.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

27 **Work Programme**

The committee reviewed the latest version of the work programme,

The committee asked for an update on changes to the Report-it function be brought to the meeting in December.

RESOLVED –

that the work programme be updated.

28 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 19 October.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.25 pm