

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 November 2022

Present: Councillor T Osborn (Chair)
Councillor F Ezeifedi (Vice-Chair)
Councillors S Ahmed, P Kloss, R Martins, K Rodrigues and
M Turmaine

Also present: Councillor Aga Dychton and Councillor Mark Watkin
(Portfolio Holder)
Clare Baars-Gordon, W3RT (minute numbers 39 to 43)
Alex Murray, W3RT (minute numbers 39 to 43)

Officers: Business Development Manager
Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Executive Director of Place
Contract & Partnership Manager – Leisure & Community
Services
Associate Director of Environment
Associate Director of ICT and Shared Services

39 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

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

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

Councillor Rodrigues declared that he was on the board of Watford Citizens' Advice Bureau.

41 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 were submitted and signed.

42 **Other scrutiny meetings - minutes**

The committee noted that the Sustainability Strategy Task Group had met on two occasions in November. Councillor Jeffree provided an overview of the work

so far which had focused on targets for Watford Borough Council and then targets for the borough more widely and encouraging residents to make changes in their own lives.

He noted that the targets were challenging and that some off-setting would be required to achieve them. There could be more ambition in relation to the town's targets and other changes in society demonstrated how people were able and willing to make radical behavioural changes. The task group would meet again in December and report back to the committee in February.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

43

Voluntary Sector Strategy

The scrutiny committee received the report of the Contracts and Partnerships Manager. She introduced the report providing the background to the original report and noting that all the recommendations had now been actioned. The work continued to be overseen through the CVS Liaison Group to discuss emerging issues, the business plan and initiatives.

Clare Baars-Gordon, Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT), highlighted some key areas in the report including recent volunteer recruitment events, the release of £16,000 in funding through the Community Fund for the cost-of-living crisis and the work with the Chamber of Conscience. The recommendations had provided an opportunity for introspection and to review approaches.

Alex Murray, W3RT, explained how Covid had changed the way of working. One priority was more events to encourage charities to network together. Regular surveys were undertaken to ensure that the local context and future requirements were well understood. The services were now engaging with more diverse groups within the town and support was being provided.

Discussing the report, the committee raised the following areas:

- The Chamber of Conscience was a CIC set up by the Chamber of Commerce as a way to collaborate with charities. Philanthropic giving and corporate volunteering were increasingly important to the voluntary sector. Volunteering levels had not recovered since Covid and a drop in government support to the charity sector was anticipated.
- W3RT engaged well with faith groups and diverse communities in the town. A lot of work had been undertaken but more could be done. Recent funding of £750,000 had been granted including to a number of groups who

worked with faith and BAME communities locally. Further suggestions about how to reach out to other groups were welcome.

- The Golden Volunteer Platform, which organisations that were members of W3RT could use, provided a snapshot of the diversity of the volunteer workforce in the town but it was not a complete picture. W3RT were happy to share this data but it represented a fraction of the local volunteers and they were looking to grow the pool of volunteers.
- There was ongoing work to reach out to young people and their families. They had met with staff from Laurence Haines School to disseminate information that could be shared with the school community.
- W3RT had been working with West Herts College to engage young people and currently had a student undertaking a creative media placement with them. This was a pilot programme that could be rolled out to other groups. Working with schools was a huge opportunity and a volunteer fair was planned in the near future.
- There were six young people on the Kickstarter apprenticeship programme and this was an excellent career and skills development opportunity.
- Outlining the due diligence that took place as part of the funding process, it was noted that it covered governance, reporting and diversity. Monitoring also took place at the end of the project to understand how effectively funding was used. Stories from the funding had been celebrated at an event in July.
- A balance had to be struck between maintaining good governance and ensuring the funding was accessible. Work was ongoing to standardise the processes across Hertfordshire.
- Paid membership of W3RT had been paused during Covid. This was under review in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. Engagement with groups was ongoing and especially with grassroots organisations that needed more support with administration. The aim was to build trust and ensure they become sustainable.
- The Chair of the trustees had recently changed and the new Chair was keen to extend the diversity of the board.

The Portfolio Holder added that the pandemic had impacted the community and engagement. The census would show how the community was more diverse than anticipated which was exciting. Challenges that remained were how to engage better and encouraging individuals to work with W3RT. She also underlined the priority of youth engagement and was hoping to hold a conference for the youth groups in the town. She expressed her thanks to the teams at W3RT and the council for their hard work in this regard.

RESOLVED –

that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the report and closes off the review of actions.

44

ICT Strategy

The committee received a presentation of the Associate Director of ICT and Shared Services. The presentation covered the structure of the service, the key priorities for the new strategy, current initiatives and next steps.

During the discussion, members raised the following:

- The council remained highly vigilant against the continued threat of cyber attacks. There was good understanding of best practice in the light of emerging threats. A lessons learned exercise had taken place with a council who had been affected by a cyber security incident and the steps taken afterwards. While no systems were 100% effective, there were a number of technological controls in place, combined with policies and all officers undertook annual mandatory cyber security training. ICT officers were part of a regional WARP (Warning, Advisory, Threat and Reporting) group, where reviews were undertaken with other councils and the sector was in a good place in sharing learning and practice.
- The most significant cyber security threat currently was probably ransomware which encrypted the user's files and travelled across networks via malicious attachments or links in emails. However, the nature of threats changed. A variety of technological controls were in place, including a ransomware product and filtering services which scanned emails and websites. There were also different types of antivirus on the devices and the servers to maximise the threat protection.
- Bring-your-own-device (BYOD) was one of the initiatives under consideration. There were a lot of implications and the network would need to be able to protect those devices from corporate devices. ICT were currently deploying Outlook in the cloud for officers as well as a pilot for One Drive. It would require the readiness of all the applications that were used internally.
- BYOD was challenging to implement well, and it was not necessarily the right approach for Watford but the views of councillors were understood. The committee discussed the value for members; while some could see the benefits, others felt that it was not a priority and much of their work could be carried out on their own devices if that was the preference.
- ICT were working with application providers, particularly Civica, to determine the options for BYOD. The councillors' devices would need to

be replaced in the coming 18 months and work would be undertaken to determine the right solution.

The Portfolio Holder underlined the transformation that the council's ICT infrastructure had undergone and how well equipped it was to manage remote working with the onset of the pandemic. He noted the complexity of managing the suite of different applications and their requirements for the services. He praised the Associate Director and her team and underlined how critical the infrastructure was for the organisation.

RESOLVED –

that the presentation be noted.

45 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.

46 Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee

The committee noted that the Health Scrutiny Committee had not met since their last meeting.

47 Work Programme

The committee reviewed the latest version of the work programme.

RESOLVED –

that the work programme be noted.

48 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 14 December.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.30 pm