

# Public Document Pack

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**24 NOVEMBER 2011**

Present: Councillor M Watkin (Chair)  
Councillor S Rackett (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors N Bell, S Greenslade, K Hastrick, P Jeffree,  
C Leslie, K McLeod (For minute numbers 40 - 45) and  
A Mortimer

Also present: Councillor Andy Wylie (Portfolio Holder for Finance and  
Shared Services),  
Councillor Asif Khan and Councillor Malcolm Meerabux

Officers: Managing Director  
Partnerships and Performance Section Head  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

### 33 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

There was a change of membership for the Committee: Councillor Leslie replaced Councillor Martins and Councillor Mortimer replaced Councillor Johnson.

### 34 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 35 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2011 were submitted and signed.

### 36 **FUTURE COUNCIL**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Managing Director. The Managing Director attended the meeting and asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider its role in the development of the Council. He outlined his report. Appendix 2 to the report asked 'What kind of Council do we want to be?' This section included key questions which would need to be addressed. He added that the Executive wanted to ensure that however services were delivered the Council's high standard of service delivery was maintained. The Scrutiny Committee would not need to consider the technical aspects of service delivery or related costs. Cabinet would be considering options put forward in the Spring. The Managing Director said that it would be useful to have the Scrutiny Committee's views to feed into this report.

The Chair commented that this was probably one of the most significant pieces of work the Scrutiny Committee would ever have to consider. He felt that it was important that this review was carried out by the full Scrutiny Committee rather than setting up a separate task Group.

The Vice-Chair stated that he considered this a useful option. Members would be able to understand the strategic implications. He quoted the example of the reduction in the number of strategic directors. He asked how the Council would maintain a coherent position as the directors brought together the different departments. He referred to the Future Council update which stated that the Heads of Service would perform a corporate role; but there would be times when they would be concerned about their own services.

A Member agreed that the review should be carried out by the full scrutiny committee. He said that the Managing Director had referred to the good practice with the SLM contractors for the leisure centres and the Housing Trust. He reminded Members about the recent petition to Council and the concerns about the way SLM had responded to users.

Following a Member's comments, the Managing Director advised that it was necessary to balance between the revenue cost base and maximising income. The Council had a substantial property portfolio' but commercial income was under pressure due to the current economic situation. Watford, compared to many areas, was maintaining a stable position. For example, Watford Business Park was fully occupied. The Council had a vision for growth and wanted to stimulate the business economy. Investment was being put into the infrastructure, which would produce significant returns to the Council in the long term. He was asking the Scrutiny Committee to consider how the Council could manage its services in the medium term.

A Ward Councillor said that it was important to consider the services residents wanted, for example the bins being emptied and streets cleaned. If the Council were to outsource services it was necessary to consider three areas;

- 1 – service quality;
- 2 – value for money;
- 3 – democratic accountability.

It was also necessary to consider the role of voluntary groups based in the community.

The Scrutiny Committee then discussed the practicalities of the review.

One Member said that it was easier to engage quickly as a smaller group.

The Chair replied that this was a good point. It was necessary to work faster than the formal scrutiny committee.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer said that with large memberships it was more difficult to find dates to suit all Members. Following a suggestion that call-in dates could be used, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that there was only one meeting prior to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee in

February. She suggested that it would be preferable to establish the group as a Task Group rather than the formal Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had to meet Access to Information deadlines and the rules around quorums.

The Chair said that he wanted all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be involved and suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair should be the same as for Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He felt there was sufficient information within the documents to produce the scoping document for the review. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer would circulate possible dates for the first meeting. He added that a questionnaire could be produced and circulated to other local authorities for their comments.

#### RESOLVED –

1. that a Task Group be established comprising the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a review into the future provision of council services.
2. that the Task Group be chaired and vice-chaired by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
3. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer circulates a list of possible dates for the first meeting.

#### 37 **CALL-IN**

No executive decisions had been called in.

#### 38 **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

The Scrutiny Committee received an update incorporating the outstanding actions and questions raised at previous meetings. Responses were included within the document or circulated at the meeting.

Members considered the responses to each of the outstanding actions and questions. They agreed which actions had been completed.

#### **PI 8 and PI 9**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer had circulated the most recent update from the Head of Environmental Services regarding the communal and Town Centre recycling bins.

The Chair asked that the responses be attached to the minutes. He added that he had asked the service to provide large wheelie bins in the Town Centre. He had felt that the existing bins did not allow for the needs of the night time economy.

#### **FP 2**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that in relation to the Herts Waste Partnership decision, Democratic Services was still

waiting to be advised when the decision was to be taken. She added that all Members would be informed of the date by the Democratic Services Manager in line with the normal procedures for delegated decisions. She advised that she would also inform the Scrutiny Committee separately.

#### **PSL 1**

It was noted that the deadline for the scope for the Policy review was incorrect and needed to be amended as this item had been placed on hold for the time being.

RESOLVED –

that the outstanding actions and questions list be updated as agreed.

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#### **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURES - SECOND QUARTER 2011/12**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head setting out the second quarter update on the Council's key performance indicators and other performance measures.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head outlined the key points in the report.

##### Community Services

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that SLM had been contacted regarding the decline in swimming statistics. The company had advised that this appeared to be a national trend. A loyalty scheme would be introduced to try to improve figures. The company had provided the overall quarter 2 throughput figures for both centres. Watford Central Leisure Centre had 103,068 through the premises and there had been 195,617 through Watford Woodside Leisure Centre. These figures would include parents accompanying children to classes, children's parties, the use of the crèche and at Central the use of the climbing wall.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the Council's Contract Monitoring Officer had been provided with access to SLM's data. Following training she would be able to access the information direct.

The Chair asked whether the income the Council received from the centres was based on attendance figures. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she was not aware of the arrangements but would ask for information which would be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee.

##### Revenues and Benefits

The Vice-Chair referred to the benefits statistics. He said that the service did not seem to be improving. The Shared Services Joint Committee had recently met and agreed to put more resources into it. He stated that the problem had

continued for too long. At Audit Committee it had been agreed to ask Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Shared Services explained that two weeks ago both councils' Portfolio Holders had met the Corporate Directors for an update. At best the backlog of new claims was steady. The backlog for changes in circumstances had increased. The Portfolio Holders had asked officers to apply additional resources. He had also spoken to the Managing Director about the issue and requested immediate action.

The Portfolio Holder advised that there were 30 people in the Benefits Team. Both Portfolio Holders had questioned whether this was the right number of staff for the team. The answer, given current workloads, was clearly 'no'. It was estimated that the level of work or caseload had increased by 25%. Officers had been asked to investigate whether there were more complex cases. The staff from Three Rivers had noticed the huge difference between Three Rivers' complex cases and those received from Watford residents.

The Portfolio Holder informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Shared Services Committee had met on 21 November and agreed further action to resolve the backlog and SERCO had been contracted for a further eight weeks. The Shared Services Joint Committee had agreed to a further expenditure of £25,000 to cover the cost. By the end of January the backlog should be cleared to a reasonable degree. He advised that sickness levels had increased in the service due to stress caused by the attitude of the public to the staff. There was constant contact from the public regarding claims and staff were unable to carry out their work.

The Portfolio Holder reported that there were 350 outstanding cases. About 12 of these were over three months old. The oldest outstanding claim dated back to May. Officers were unable to close a claim until requested by the client. Easy applications were completed quickly. The more complicated claims were being allocated to senior officers. It was necessary to consider whether this level of workload would continue in the future. If it were to continue it would be necessary to add more permanent resources. He stated that he did not want to see the same problem recurring next year.

The Portfolio Holder commented that there were various changes happening to benefits, for example the Universal Credit. He did not want to see benefit staff leaving voluntarily due to their concerns about the loss of their jobs in the future.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would ask officers to ensure that the information on the Shared Services website was up to date. He urged Members not to scrutinise the service at the present time as this would require officer involvement at an important time. He asked that Members delay consideration until the end of January.

A Member said that the Head of Revenues and Benefits had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July. At the time he had said that it was hoped that staff would be 'on top' of the backlog by December. This was one of

the most important risk factors which affected the Council. The Members said that the situation had got worse since that meeting. He understood the Portfolio Holder had met the Managing Director about the problem. He hoped that more resources would be put into the service. He suggested that the Head of Revenues and Benefits should be invited back to speak to the Scrutiny Committee.

The Portfolio Holder responded that the current position was not worse than July. When the Head of Revenues and Benefits had spoken to the Scrutiny Committee there were over 400 new claims outstanding. He had anticipated the backlog would be clear. The Portfolio Holder said that in mid November he had been advised that the backlog had not been cleared and this had been the reason he had seen the Managing Director. The non-executive members of the Shared Services Joint Committee had made their views clear.

The Vice-Chair said that he respected the comment that if the service was scrutinised it would take officers away from dealing with the backlog but this problem affected a lot of people. For many this was possibly the first time they had had to apply for help. Homes were at risk and people were frustrated.

The Chair commented that the service was trying to work beyond its capacity. If the service were scrutinised the result of the review needed to make a difference. He did not want to divert people from reducing the backlog. He felt it was appropriate for Members to voice their concerns and for the Head of Revenues and Benefits to be invited back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Portfolio Holder said that he acknowledged there was scrutiny which could be carried out once the section had reduced the backlog. The Shared Services Joint Committee had agreed to additional funding until the end of January. He felt that this would be the appropriate time to commence a scrutiny of the workload and the wider issues for the section. An update had been circulated at the Shared Services Joint Committee which had set out the latest number of outstanding claims. The Portfolio Holder said that he could not provide any guarantees about the service. He did not see the service every day but as soon as he was aware there was a problem he would ensure the appropriate action was taken. It was possible that Members could scrutinise how the backlog was handled.

A Member agreed with the Portfolio Holder's comments. The Shared Services Joint Committee had taken the matter seriously. Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be duplicating the work of the Joint Committee.

A Member, who was not a member of the Scrutiny Committee, advised that he was a member of the Shared Services Joint Committee and Audit Committee. The problems had been noted at both committees. Residents should be able to expect a service from the Council. He questioned whether the Council was providing a value for money service. He encouraged the Scrutiny Committee to ask the service questions.

A Member advised that the national figures from the Department for Works and Pensions had shown a significant increase in claims. New claims added to the pressures in the section. He cautioned that in January the temporary Christmas jobs would be at an end and there were likely to be more claims. It was important that resources were directed where appropriate. He suggested reviewing the position late January.

The Vice-Chair reminded Members that it was possible to call-in Shared Services Joint Committee's decision. He questioned what had happened during July and November that had meant the backlog was not decreasing. He asked what the Portfolio Holder had done. He acknowledged the suggestion for some strategic scrutiny. He requested that he was included in any information between this meeting and the next.

The Portfolio Holder advised that Members' connection to the service was through the Shared Services' website.

The Vice-Chair asked what would happen if the work was not carried out despite the additional funding and who would address the problem.

The Portfolio Holder responded that the Scrutiny Committee's responsibility was to scrutinise the Council and not to follow an individual. Officers had been tasked to look at the level of workload versus the current resources. The cost of processing needed to be considered. At Shared Services Joint Committee an Opposition Councillor had suggested outsourcing the service. It would be useful to look at other local authorities and how they work.

The Portfolio Holder agreed that there were questions to be investigated, for example what had happened during this period. If people were in and out of work this could be affecting the workload. The Scrutiny Committee could look at the level of resources compared to the workload.

The Chair commented that the Scrutiny Committee would determine its own priorities. He acknowledged the Portfolio Holder had outlined a possible review and to compare with other authorities. He asked the Portfolio Holder when the information would be presented to him.

The Portfolio Holder replied that he had some information but it was incomplete. It was likely that the comparative data would be available within the next two or three weeks.

A Member commented that he considered it acceptable that the Vice-Chair should ask for a briefing. He added that the Scrutiny Committee should be given the data.

The Chair said that he hoped the Portfolio Holder would provide the information once it was available. He stated that the Head of Revenues and Benefits would be invited to the next meeting. Unless there had been a material change in circumstances the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would undertake a review

of the service. He did not want the review to take place at the present time and contribute to the problems the service was experiencing.

The Portfolio Holder advised that a report had been tabled at the Shared Services Joint Committee which provided details of the benefit backlog. This could be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee. He said that in fairness to the Head of Service the Revenues section was working well. It was only the benefits section which was causing concern. The performance of the benefit staff was very good. The point had been made at Shared Services Joint Committee that enough promises had been made and it was necessary to get on top of the situation.

### Corporate Services

The Vice-Chair asked for details of the number of complaints received by the Council.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she did not have this information but would circulate the details. She understood that generally the number of complaints were low.

### Human Resources

#### HR1 – Sickness absence

The Portfolio Holder stated that there had been an increase to the sickness statistics and that this could be related to the benefit section. The number of stress-related days sick was substantial. He advised that he had asked for more details. This was a further reason that the service's problems needed to be resolved. If the benefit figures were removed the performance figure would be roughly on target. The Committee requested that this information be made available.

### General comments

A Member noted that there were more indicators below their target than on target or above. He asked whether there would be improvements in quarter 3.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that Leadership Team received the performance information and monitored performance on a regular basis. Some of the indicators could be related to the economic downturn and it would be difficult to see them improving whilst the economic situation was difficult, for example the homelessness indicators. The aim was to maintain those which had improved.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Scrutiny Committee's comments be noted.



2. that the Head of Revenues and Benefits be invited to the next meeting to advise on the progress of the Benefit service.

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#### **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP UPDATE**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that the first Task Group meeting had taken place on 17 October 2011. Representatives from the Community Safety Partnership had attended the meeting. The Task Group was informed about the Partnership and the representatives responded to Members questions.

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 6 December. The Task Group would be receiving crime statistics for the Watford area. A representative from the Partnership would be attending to help explain the statistics and how they were collated.

A Member said that he had found the meeting very useful and it had been the first time he had made a link with people who had an impact on residents' lives.

Further meetings were to be arranged.

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#### **HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP UPDATE**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Task Group had met on 5 October. A number of questions had been produced and forwarded to the Patient Advice and Liaison Services. The Task Group considered the responses at the meeting. A further meeting had been set up and the Task Group would be reviewing its recommendations. The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer had produced a number of draft recommendations based on Members' comments at the meeting. These recommendations had been circulated to the Task Group and the final versions would be considered at the meeting.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer suggested that there would possibly need to be one further meeting to finalise the Task Group's report prior to its presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February.

The Chair commented that this Task Group had seemed to move slowly.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer responded that this had been the first task Group set up under the new scrutiny arrangements and officers and Members were on a learning curve. She suggested that when Overview and Scrutiny Committee established future Task Groups, Members might wish to consider setting a deadline. If the Task Group had not completed its work by the deadline then the Task Group's Chair should attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain the reason for delay.

A Member said that when Task Groups were looking at the work of external bodies it could take longer.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that with the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group, Members had suggested some questions at a meeting which were then circulated for final agreement. Once agreed the questions were forwarded to the hospital's representatives. It was necessary to allow them some time to obtain the information prior to them attending the meeting and speaking to Members.

A Member, who was also a member of the Task Group, said that he felt the report would be ready soon after the meeting in December.

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## **FORWARD PLAN**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Head of Legal and Property Services setting out the changes to the Forward Plan when compared to the edition presented at the previous meeting.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the report contained information from three editions, those issued in September, October and November.

A Member said that he had not been aware that a decision had been required for the appointment of consultants to develop detailed design options for the public realm improvements for the Parade and Town Hall subway.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that this key decision had first appeared in the September Forward Plan for consideration by Cabinet. In the October edition the decision-maker had been amended from Cabinet to Chief Officer. The Executive Director (Services) had made the decision on 1 November 2011.

The Member said that he would have been interested in seeing the brief that prospective consultants would be given.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would contact the Executive Director (Services) and ask whether it was possible for the Member to see a copy.

A Member commented that Councillors were able to attend any delegated decision.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that all Members were informed when a delegated decision by a Portfolio Holder was due to take place. Members were provided with copies of the relevant documents and were able to attend the decision-making meeting. Following the decision being taken all Members were forwarded a copy of the decision and informed of the call-in deadline. Officer decisions were slightly different. Generally the decision was taken by the officer and Members were then provided with a copy of the decision and the deadline for call-in.

The Portfolio Holder added that he welcomed other Councillors to any delegated decisions he was making and was happy to respond to their questions. There had also been occasions when he had invited interested individuals to the meetings.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the Forward Plan was published on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month unless it happened to fall on a weekend, then it was published either on the Friday or Monday nearest that date. The Democratic Services Manager informed Members when it was published.

The Chair suggested that Members should look at the Forward Plan and consider whether they wanted any further information about any of the proposed key decisions. Members should not wait until the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee to check the information in the Forward Plan. They should contact the relevant officer before the meeting.

RESOLVED –

that the additions and amendments to the Forward Plan be noted.

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#### **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: PUBLIC PRIDE**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Head of Legal and Property Services. The Appendix to the report included the original recommendations from the Public Pride review; Cabinet's response; officer's response to the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee; the minutes and resolutions from the January meeting and the Head of Environmental Services' response to the resolutions agreed in January.

The Vice-Chair suggested that the Chair should write to the Head of Service for a further explanation as the details in the report were not very clear.

The Chair questioned whether April 2013 was correct. He wondered whether it should have read 2012.

Following a question about the number of calls received during 2011, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that this related to a six-month period.

A Member, who had chaired the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee in January said that she had thought the street cleansing policy was to be reviewed but in January the officers had replied that the existing policy was working. When people telephoned with a complaint it was dealt with. The service should advertise to the public that if they contacted the service they would get a response. With regard to recommendation 6 in the original report, this related to other landowners and not just Watford Community Housing Trust.

The Chair suggested that it might be possible to ask Environmental Services to carry out a survey of hotspots. Members could also look out for areas which were clearly not maintained.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the Head of Planning's response and the information about the enforcement action undertaken through Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 2010.

The Chair suggested that the Scrutiny Committee should ask for the enforcement data.

A Member suggested that the Probation Service could help keeping public land clear by requiring their clients to undertake the work. Voluntary groups were also important in keeping land tidy, for example friends of the various parks. West Herts College could be involved if they ran landscaping courses. The students could practice on land.

The Chair thanked the Member for his comments and the alternative ways that the service could be delivered. The recommendations were related to the policies in place at the time.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Scrutiny Committee's comments be noted.
2. that the Chair writes to the Head of Environmental Services regarding his latest response.
3. that detailed information about the enforcement cases investigated under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 2010 be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee.

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## **WORK PROGRAMME AND TASK GROUPS**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Head of Legal and Property Services including the updated work programme.

### **Task Groups**

#### Review of Recycling Scheme

The Chair stated that the Scrutiny Committee had already agreed to establish one Task Group to look at the future provision of Council services. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services was keen for his suggested scrutiny proposal to be carried out.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that, following the Scrutiny Committee's request at the last meeting, she had received some statistics which had been set out in reports to the Herts Waste Partnership. She had also checked Three Rivers District Council's website for information about its recycling arrangements.

The Chair advised that the recycling rates for Three rivers had increased. The review could consider how the decision had been made, the impact on residents

and how the service was introduced. He envisaged that the review would take two or three meetings. Research would need to be carried out. It was likely that the Task Group would want to invite the Head of Service from Three Rivers District Council and possibly other authorities.

#### Other suggestions

The Chair explained the other suggestions. He advised that Councillor Lynch's suggestion regarding cycling on the pavement covered cyclists' behaviour and provision for cycling in Watford. He suggested that this should not be carried out at the present time. He added that he had asked the County Council for information about the review of the South West Herts Transportation Strategy. He questioned where the Borough Council's involvement was in the review. If the subject were reviewed in the future it might cover the delineation of the cycle routes in the Town Centre.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Section 106 funding for cycling used to be held by the Borough Council but this had now been transferred to the County Council. He suggested that if the review were carried out in the future Members might wish to speak to the Transports and Projects Officer who had been involved in many of the cycling schemes in the town.

The Chair advised that, with regard to the suggested review into addressing the housing needs of disadvantaged groups, he had spoken to the Head of Community Services. She had requested that the department was not asked to be involved in any reviews whilst the service was in the middle of re-organisation. She asked for it to be delayed until the next Municipal Year.

The Chair then informed the Scrutiny Committee that Councillor Lynch's scrutiny suggestion about the YMCA had arisen following a piece of casework. He questioned whether the Council should delve into the internal systems of the YMCA. He felt this could be a larger scrutiny and could consider how drugs issues were being addressed.

The Vice-Chair suggested that this review could be delegated to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group. This issue had previously been reviewed by Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee. He suggested that the review could consider how the various agencies were coping and look at the provision for drug treatment.

It was agreed that the subject would be forwarded to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group.

The Portfolio Holder commented that there was concern about the prevalence of drugs in the transient population. He said that it might be useful to find out how the trend had changed over the last two or three years. He fully supported this suggested topic.

A Member added that many of the services were linked to the County Council.

## **Previous reviews**

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to prioritise the list of previous reports which the Chair had asked to re-visit and consider any outstanding recommendations.

Members agreed that the reviews be carried out in the order listed in paragraph 3.16 of the report.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. that the latest version of the work programme be noted.
2. that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee establishes the following Task Groups –
  - Review of Recycling Scheme
  - Future Council Review
3. that a review of the Benefits service be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February.
4. that the appointment of the final membership of the Recycling Scheme Task Group be delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in consultation with the Head of Legal and Property Services.
5. that the review of the previous reports be carried out in the following order-
  - The Colosseum
  - Green Spaces
  - Choice Based Lettings
  - Elections in 2010
  - Neighbourhood Forums

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### **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Thursday 22 December 2011 (For call-in only)
- Thursday 2 February 2012
- Wednesday 7 March 2012

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 9.30 pm

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 24 November 2011

### Item 6

#### PI 8

Communal recycling - new green bins. A review was due to be carried out in September/October 2011 to consider the effectiveness of the new bin (locked lids and narrow slits). Has the review been carried out and what were the findings?

#### **Response from the Head of Environmental Services (23 November 2011)**

The communal recycling figures are incorporated into the waste and recycling statistics. Around one third of the properties in Watford are flats or multi occupancy accommodations, with over 300 communal recycling sites across the town. The locked lids with narrow slits were placed at locations with known contamination problems and have been successful in preventing any contamination of the communal green waste bins. However it had also proved to make recycling of green waste and cardboard more difficult for some residents. Given this a review has taken place and at some locations, where there are good waste management arrangements, then alternatives to the locked lid can be provided. We are also currently piloting larger slits in the green bin lids, still with locked lids, to see if this makes recycling of green waste easier but also keeps contamination levels down.

#### PI 9

Town Centre Recycling bins. In July you had said that the impact on recycling performance of these bins was negligible and there was still an issue with contamination. Have the Town Centre problems been resolved and will you be placing more bins outside other shops across the town?

#### **Response from the Head of Environmental Services (23 November 2011)**

The on-street recycling bins provide an opportunity for members of the public to continue with good recycling behaviour whilst out and about but their impact on the recycling rate is so small as to be negligible. There are some problems with contamination of these recycling bins which unfortunately means that the content of those bins is not recycled. We are piloting a couple of on-street recycling bins at an out of town centre location and will assess how this goes before deciding on any further roll-out of the on street recycling facilities.

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