



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2nd February, 2012

7.00 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Publication date: 25 January 2012

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Sandra Hancock in Legal and Property Services on 01923 278377 or by email to legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk (Minicom available on 01923 278499).

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor M Watkin (Chair)

Councillor S Rackett (Vice-Chair)

Councillors N Bell, S Greenslade, K Hastrick, P Jeffree, S Johnson, R Martins and K McLeod

AGENDA

PART A - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 November and 22 December 2011 to be submitted and signed. *(All minutes are available on the Council's website.)*

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS (Pages 1 - 20)

The document sets out the update on the outstanding actions which arose at previous meetings.

5. CALL-IN

To consider any Executive decisions which have been called in by the requisite number of Members.

6. HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT (Pages 21 - 36)

To review the final report from the Task Group and to endorse the final document prior to forwarding it to the West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

7. WASTE AND RECYCLING REVIEW - TASK GROUP UPDATE

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer to provide a verbal update on the progress of the Task Group.

8. THE WAY AHEAD FOR COUNCIL SERVICES - TASK GROUP UPDATE

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer and Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a verbal update on the progress of the Task Group.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP - UPDATE

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer to provide a verbal update on the progress of the Task Group.

10. FORWARD PLAN (Pages 37 - 40)

The latest update of the Forward Plan since the previous meeting.

11. PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: SERVICES FOR THE DECEASED (Pages 41 - 54)

To review the recommendations from the Services for the Deceased report as requested by Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.

12. PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: FUTURE OF THE COLOSSEUM (Pages 55 - 60)

To review the update to the recommendations from the Future of the Colosseum report.

13. WORK PROGRAMME AND ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 61 - 82)

To review the latest version of the work programme and to discuss suggestions for inclusion in the Scrutiny Committee's contribution to the Scrutiny Annual Report.

14. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Wednesday 7 March 2012
- Wednesday 29 March 2012 (For call-in only)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Outstanding Actions and questions

Action to be carried out	Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer	
Outstanding Actions					
Performance Report					
PI 12	Contact the Housing Section Head to enquire when the outcome of the funding bids approved by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will be known.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	26 July 2011	15 August 2011	The original response is available from the Committee and Scrutiny Officer or by viewing the report to the Scrutiny Committee in September.
	Further update required at the meeting in November.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	21 September 2011	11 November 2011	The Head of Community Services advised that officers were still waiting for details of the final outcome. The HCA were still negotiating with Registered Providers.
	Further update once information available	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	23 January 2012	The latest response is attached as Appendix 1 to this update.
PI 13	Town Enforcement Officer – the Scrutiny Committee to review the progress of this post and what had been achieved.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	21 September 2011	7 March 2012	Added to rolling work programme.

Action to be carried out		Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer
PI 16	Check whether the Council's income from the leisure centres is based on the numbers visiting the two centres.	Partnerships and Performance Section Head	24 November 2011	15 January 2012	The Partnerships and Performance Section Head has been asked to provide an update.
PI 17	Circulate additional Benefits' information circulated at the Shared Service Joint Committee to OSC Members.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	1 December 2011	Completed.
PI 18	Circulate information about the number of complaints received with regard to performance indicators Co4 and Co5	Partnerships and Performance Section Head	24 November 2011	15 January 2012	The Partnerships and Performance Section Head has been asked to provide an update.
PI 19	Circulate an analysis of the sickness statistics, excluding revenues and benefits	Partnerships and Performance Section Head	24 November 2011	15 January 2012	The Partnerships and Performance Section Head has been asked to provide an update.
Voluntary Sector Task Group					
VS 1	The recommendations to be reviewed once the review of current priorities has been completed.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	23 June 2011	July 2012	Added to rolling work programme

Action to be carried out	Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer	
Community Safety Partnership Task Group					
CSP 1	The scrutiny proposal 'recruitment of ex-offenders and disadvantaged youth' to be referred to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group for review from a general aspect and not just related to the Council.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	23 June 2011	For consideration by the Task Group at its first meeting – 17 October 2011	The scrutiny proposal was considered at the Community Safety Partnership Task Group. Members are considering whether to expand it to cover other areas which affect ex-offenders. The suggestion has been added to the Task Group's rolling work programme.
Affordable Housing Review					
AHR 1	<u>Recommendation 1 – Affordable Housing threshold</u> – The status of the Core Strategy to be reviewed in 12 months.	OSC Committee	26 July 2011	July 2012	Added to the rolling work programme.
AHR 2	<u>Recommendation 5 – Housing Resources</u> – Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review this recommendation once the Housing Value for Money Phase 2 has been agreed.	OSC Committee	26 July 2011	2 February 2012 <i>Original date 24 November 2011</i>	Budget considered the report at the meeting held on 29 November 2011 and its comments were forwarded to Cabinet which considered the report at the meeting on 5 December 2011. Cabinet agreed the new structure for Housing and the selection process for the new structure.

Action to be carried out	Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer	
Forward Plan					
FP 2	Herts Waste Partnership decision – All Members to be informed as soon as the date of the decision is known.	Committee and Scrutiny Officer		End of January 2012 <i>Original date September 2011</i>	The delegated decision was taken on Friday 13 January at Wiggshall Depot. All Councillors were informed of the decision by email on Tuesday 17 January 2012.
FP 3	Ask the Executive Director Services if Members are able to see the development brief for the design options for the public realm improvements	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	23 December 2012	Member training session arranged for 31 January to provide information about the public realm improvements.
Work Programme and Task Groups					
WP 5	Establish Task Group to look at the future delivery of council services	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	1 December 2011	The Task Group comprises the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee
WP 6	Establish Task Group to review waste and recycling procedures	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	1 December 2011	Task Group membership was agreed and first meeting took place on 17 January.
WP 7	Information to be sought from the County Council about the South West Herts Cycling Strategy review	Chair	24 November 2011	31 December 2011	

Action to be carried out		Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer
WP 8	Community Safety Partnership Task Group to be asked to review the provision of drug treatment in the borough	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	1 December 2011	Referred to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer supporting the Community Safety Partnership Task Group. Discussed at the meeting on 6 December and agreed to do this review in March 2012.
WP 9	Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the latest position of the Benefits Service in February	Committee and Scrutiny Officer, Partnerships and Performance Section Head and Head of Revenues and Benefits	24 November 2011	23 January 2012	The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Shared Services has been invited to provide an update at the February meeting. The latest report presented to the Three Rivers and Watford Shared Services Joint Committee is attached for information.
WP 10	Previous reviews to be re-visited in the following order of priority and added to the work programme – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Colosseum • Green Spaces • Choice Based Lettings • Elections in 2010 • Neighbourhood Forums 	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	23 January 2012	The update for the 'Future of the Colosseum' review is included on the agenda for 2 February 2012. Update on the 'Green Spaces' review to be presented to the March meeting.

Action to be carried out	Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer
Property Services Leases for Voluntary Sector				
PSL 1	A draft Property Policy review scope to be drawn up.	Chair and Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny	26 July 2011	This item is on hold.
Future Council Task Group				
FC 1	Prepare the scoping document for the Future Council Task Group	Chair and Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	19 December 2011 The scope was drafted and agreed at the Task Group's meeting on 10 January.
FC 2	Circulate possible dates for the Task Group	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	19 December 2011 First meeting held on 10 January and the further dates have been agreed.
Waste and Recycling Review Task Group				
WR 1	Waste and Recycling Review Task Group to be set up – invite Members to participate	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	16 December 2011 All non-executive Members invited to take part in the Task Group.
WR 2	Agree the membership for the Waste and Recycling Review Task Group	Chair, Vice-Chair and Head of Legal and Property Services	24 November 2011	16 December 2011 Membership agreed.

Action to be carried out		Responsibility	Committee Date	Deadline	Comments/officer
WR 3	Prepare the scoping document for the Task Group	Chair and Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	19 December 2011	Draft scope agreed and confirmed at the first meeting.
WR 4	Identify dates for the Task Group's meeting	Committee and Scrutiny Officer	24 November 2011	19 December 2011	The first meeting was held on Tuesday 17 January 2012 and further dates have been agreed.
Public Pride Review Update					
PP 1	Recommendation 6 (land maintenance) – letter to be sent to ask for further clarification and	Chair	24 November 2011	15 January 2012	The Head of Environmental Services has confirmed that April 2013 is the correct date as quoted in the up date for recommendation 6 of the Public Pride review presented at November meeting. Between now and then the service is focusing on the service re-design project as the key priority on top of the day to day work and other planned projects.
PP 2	Data on enforcement to be circulated to the OSC	Committee and Scrutiny Officer and Head of Planning	24 November 2011	15 January 2012	The Head of Planning has been asked for the latest enforcement data. The information will be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee as soon as it is available.

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Affordable Homes Programme

Throughout 2011-15, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) aims to invest £4.5bn in affordable housing through the Affordable Homes Programme and existing commitments through the previous National Affordable Homes Programme. The majority of the new programme will be delivered as Affordable Rent.

Successful bidders are expected to deliver 80,000 new affordable homes.

Hertfordshire falls within the East and South East operating area for the HCA where 14,432 affordable homes are expected be delivered (10,874 affordable rent and 3,558 affordable home ownership), which is 18.04% of the homes supported across England with grant funding of almost £230m.

Bidders were not required to detail all sites that they would develop as part of their programme, but to specify the numbers of dwellings, of different types, that they would provide, for a given amount of grant funding, across a given area (Watford formed part of the Hertfordshire area for bidding purposes). There was also a requirement to specify the amount of conversions on relet that would be made to support the bid.

Successful bids in Hertfordshire are to provide 2,292 affordable homes (1,629 affordable rent and 663 affordable home ownership). There are to be a total of 2,641 conversions of relets, the vast majority of which will convert to affordable rent. The successful bidders and headline programme details are shown in the table below.

Registered Provider	Affordable Rent	Affordable Home Ownership	Conversions
A2Dominion Housing Group			14
Affinity Sutton Group Ltd	130	60	787
Bellway Homes Ltd	30	9	0
Bovis Homes	115	68	0
BPHA	6	3	0
Circle Anglia Limited	97	25	404
Dacorum Borough Council	45	0	45
East Thames Group (Broxbourne HA)	177	6	400
Galliford Try Homes Limited	62	56	0
Genesis Housing Association	21	0	80
Hastoe Housing Association	30	7	8
Home Group Limited	128	69	109
Housing 21	27	16	0
Logic Homes Ltd	23	0	0
London and Quadrant			16
Metropolitan Housing Trust Ltd	28	7	7
Network Housing Group (Riversmead)	85	89	463
Octavia Housing	21	19	43
One Housing Group	82	15	0

One Housing Group	15	3	0
Paradigm Housing Group	129	100	90
Persimmon Homes Limited	49	23	0
Sanctuary Housing Association	60	0	66
Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd	152	65	0
The Abbeyfield Society	7	8	0
The Guinness Trust	60	15	46
The Places for People Group	50	0	61
The Riverside Group			2
Total	1,629	663	2,641

THREE RIVERS & WATFORD SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting – 23 January 2012

PART A

Title: REVENUES AND BENEFITS - UPDATE
Report of: Phil Adlard – Head of Revenues and Benefits

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This report gives an update on the revenues and benefits service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the contents of the report are noted.

2.2 That subject to the conditions in para 3.3 future use of SERCO resilience resource be continued.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Phil Adlard - Head of Revenues & Benefits

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email: phil.adlard@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

David Gardner, Director of Corporate Resources & Governance – Three Rivers D.C.

Tricia Taylor, Executive Director, Resources – Watford B.C.

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 At its meeting on 21 November 2011, the Committee agreed that £25,000 be allocated to engage SERCO to assist with the reduction of the volume of Benefits work outstanding. This report highlights progress so far.

3.2 The results to date:-

- (1) 3,156 documents were allocated to SERCO on 29 November 2011. At the close of business on 23 December 2011, 373 remained outstanding.
- (2) As this report was written (9 January 2012) no invoices had been received but our records of the time spent by SERCO shows that we would expect invoices totally £8,840
- (3) In light of the progress made in the first four weeks, a final 2900 documents were transferred to SERCO.
- (4) We continue to monitor the position on a daily basis and ensure that any time lost is made up.
- (5) At the same time, Shared Service staff continued to process "current" work including New Claims
- (6) As at 9 January 2012, there were 239 Watford New Claims outstanding (127 of which were awaiting further information from claimants) and 121 Three Rivers' New Claims (64 in pending). A verbal update will be given to members on 23 January 2012.
- (7) This represents a drop of 113 and 52 respectively from the 21 November 2011 meeting.
- (8) In addition to New Claims, there are 1643 items being dealt with by the Shared Service staff although a large number of these relate to future changes (i.e. effective April 2012)

3.3 The findings from the results of the first four weeks of activity using SERCO shows:

- (1) Whilst in a "steady state", the Shared Service is managing the volume of incoming work which indicates that it is staffed appropriately.
- (2) We have shown that by closely monitoring the output of work from SERCO that they are able to deal with the work given satisfactorily.
- (3) Although we are able to deal with the "normal" flow of work, periods of heightened activity, for instance at year end, will place an

additional burden on the Shared Service which will result in a further backlog.

- (4) We do not believe that it would be sensible to seek to increase the establishment at a time of uncertainty, particularly with a view to Universal Credit and the new arrangements for Council Tax Support to deal solely with these peak periods.
- (5) The recommendation is that by continual monitoring of the workload, a “trigger point” is established at 2000 documents at which SERCO would be used as a short-term resilience support with costs covered from existing budgets

3.4 Progress has also been made in respect of the ISCAS review of the service. Attached at Appendix A is an update showing outstanding actions.

Of the original 73 recommendations, 13 that are not “business critical” remain open with a deadline in 2012 as shown. A further recommendation 5.3.11 is also shown as resolved “in part” as this is subject to ongoing activity by the Revenues Manager.

3.5 In addition to the progress highlighted above, both Benefit Subsidy Claims in respect of 2010/11 for Watford (total value £38m) and Three Rivers (£27m) were approved by the External Auditors without qualification.

3.6 The Project for the Installation of the Academy E-Services has commenced. To date we have completed the necessary upgrades required to proceed in addition to a complete removal and restore of the ABC adaptors to the Test Environment that will enable a “cleaner” and hopefully smoother installation.

In addition, we have completed the necessary completion of proforma to enable both Capita and Team Netsol to customise the E-Services and enable completion of e-claims.

3.7 We have also been conducting a review of Single Person Discounts awarded to taxpayers in both authorities as part of a County-wide exercise. The costs of the exercise have been apportioned 14:76:10 between the districts, the county and the police authority with subsequent benefits apportioned likewise.

3.8 The results for Watford as at 10 January 2012 are:

- (1) Cases identified - 1754
- (2) Forms issued - 1754
- (3) Discounts approved - 885
- (4) Discounts removed - 113
- (5) Additional income generated (based on Band D) - £5,996
- (6) Cost incurred - £348
- (7) Reminders Issued - 672
- (8) Cases referred for further action by the authority - 84

3.9 The results for Three Rivers as at 10 January 2012 are:

- (1) Cases identified - 1482
- (2) Forms issued - 1482
- (3) Discounts approved - 764
- (4) Discounts removed – 94
- (5) Additional income generated (based on Band D) - £4,803
- (6) Cost incurred – £282
- (7) Reminders Issued – 559
- (8) Cases referred for further action by the authority - 65

3.10 The exercise has also enabled the two authorities to improve the quality of its data and award appropriate discount disregards to qualifying cases, for example in relation to students, apprentices etc

3.11 Finally collection rates remain strong in light of the current climate with the collection rates at the end of December 2011 being as follows:

Council Tax

Watford – 82.1% (80.4% December 2010)

Three Rivers – 88.1% (87.7%)

Business Rate

Watford – 88.6% (87.2%)

Three Rivers – 89.2% (87.3%)

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 None specific to this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 None specific.

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS HEALTH CHECK: PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN AS AT 3 JANUARY 2012

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
3.6.2	Ongoing processes should be set up to ensure daily reconciliation of payments between Cedar and Academy is maintained and not just reconcile to the posting file.	High	23/05/11 – Concentration on reconciling closing account as at 31/03/11. Existing controls will be in place for 2011/12 03/01/12 – Process has been devised to enable regular reconciliation and support measures currently in place. Final meeting scheduled for 06/01/12 to agree implementation and operation	Benefits Manager	March 2011	In part	January 2012
3.6.4 and 7.1.13	Reconciliation of the Benefits system to all financial systems should be commenced immediately. Processes and procedures must be agreed with Finance.	High	To be dealt with at the same time as 3.6.2 above 03/01/12 – Process has been devised to enable regular reconciliation and support measures currently in place. Final meeting scheduled for 06/01/12 to agree implementation and operation	Benefits Manager	March 2011	In part	January 2012
3.6.5	A review of cheque handling and control within the benefits service should be undertaken. This should include the automatic interface of cheque payments.	Medium	Interface will require involvement of both Academy & COA. Existing controls in place are adequate and recommendation not a high priority 03/01/12 – The current system of journal entries is considered adequate	Benefits Manager	March 2011	Yes	
3.6.6	Clarification of the procedure for emergency payments for the service as a whole is needed. A review and documentation of the reconciliation procedure for both Watford and Three Rivers payments should occur.	Medium	Existing controls are in place but formalised procedure to be drafted. 03/01/12 – Resolved. HB payments are run twice weekly and able to run ad-hoc payments via the system avoiding any reconciliation issues	Benefits Manager & Revenues Manager	April 2011	Yes	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
4.4.2	Provide officers with clear procedures for the inputting of data into the Academy system.	High	“ACS” Procedure Manual has already been purchased and will be updated on an ongoing process. New post of Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader will be responsible 03/01/12 – Procedure Maps have been sent to ACS so that this resource may be used	Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	
5.3.1 And 6.7.1	Move the Academy systems on to one server as soon as possible	High	Originally delayed to bring releases up to date. Project commenced May 2011 reporting progress to Programme Board. 03/01/02 – Completed by 29 August 2011	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	
5.3.4	Review the current structure	Medium	Much work had been undertaken in forming existing structure prior to implementation of Shared Service. No further action in short-term Not a priority action – will review by end of 2011/12	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2012	No	
5.3.7	Plan for single persons discount review over quarters 3 and 4	Low	Working in partnership with Herts CC 03/01/02 – Review commenced in December 2011	Revenues Manager	December 2011	Yes	
5.3.10	Harmonise payment dates as soon as possible	Medium	Most date are harmonised apart from DD. Will review for 2012/13 03/01/02 – Review carried out September 2011 and no business case to amend payment dates	Revenues Manager	April 2012	Yes	
5.3.11	Harmonise working practices and polices relating to disablement relief	Medium	Work underway – Inspector in process of reviewing cases 03/01/12 – Cases identified and action underway to resolve discrepancies	Revenues Manager	July 2011	In part	January 2012
5.3.12	Consider reviewing bailiff performance and selecting the highest performing company	Medium	Agreed – will monitor performance of existing bailiffs in first half of 2011/12 03/01/02 – Review is continuing but not a high priority. Revised deadline set for December 2012	Revenues Manager	October 2011	No	December 2012

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
5.3.13	Either write off debts or reinstate committal proceedings unless it is uneconomic to collect the debt	Low	Agreed – two staff have been tasked to identify cases for write-off 03/01/02 – Harmonised write-off policy agreed and debts not being written off in accordance with policy	Revenues Manager	September 2011	Yes	
5.3.14	Harmonise recovery policies relating to bankruptcies.	Low	Agreed – not high priority. Will be resolved during 2011/12	Revenues Manager	March 2012	No	
5.3.19	Notepads from the old Civica system have not been converted into the Academy system Either bring the information into the Academy system or import them into the Anite system using functionality within Anite	Medium	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/12 – As we have moved further away from the migration from previous systems to Academy, there is no longer a business case for converting notepads. Access is available and for the volume of cases affected deemed sufficient. – Closed	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	
5.3.20 And 8.1.7	Review the use of Anite to bring efficiencies to the service	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/12 – This has been subject of a number of discussions with Northgate the system providers. Progress is slow but we are continuing to explore how best to use the system	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	Feb 2012 (from Sept 2011)
5.3.21	Obtain an independent review of Academy or liaise with other authorities as to functionality available.	High	Will consider once migration to one server has been completed. We have the option to have “health checks” and will take this up. In meantime will make use of existing expertise across both councils in shared service.	Head of Revenues & Benefits	August 2011	No	March 2012
5.3.22	Review the clerical/administrative support required within the structure	Medium	Much work had been undertaken in forming existing structure prior to implementation of Shared Service. No further action in short-term Not a priority action – will review by end of 2011/12	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2012	No	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
5.3.23	Review printing of demand notices when Academy has been migrated to one system	Medium	Migration originally delayed to bring releases up to date. Project commenced May 2011 reporting progress to Programme Board. 03/01/02 – Migration completed 29/0811	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	
6.6.3	Measure the actual workload within the Anite system and not just those items entered onto the Academy system.	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/02 - Regular monitoring now underway using reports from both Academy and Anite	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	
6.6.4	Provide Customer Care training for all officers.	Medium	Will be delivered following introduction of new working practices with CSC taking more front-line queries. 03/01/12 – recent attention has been on clearing cases and any issues have been dealt with on a case by case basis. There is an acknowledgment that refresher training is required and this will be arranged for May 2012	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	May 2012 (from July 2011)
6.6.6	Undertake customer surveys to measure satisfaction with the service	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC 03/01/12 – This has not been a high priority to date with focus on clearing work)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	June 2012 (from June 2011)
6.6.7	Develop a measurement process of the target for customer care within the whole service.	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC 03/01/12 – This has not been a high priority to date with focus on clearing work)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	June 2012 (from June 2011)
6.7.1 And 5.3.1	Review the project to migrate the Academy system and move the system on to one server as soon as possible	High	Originally delayed to bring releases up to date. Project commenced May 2011 reporting progress to Programme Board. 03/01/02 – Completed by 29/08/11	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	Aug 2011

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
7.1.2	Fast track new (clean) claims – consider a fast track service for customers at the CSC	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC 03/01/02 – Triage system now in place to identify clean claims and prioritise	Benefit Manager	June 2011	Yes	
7.1.5	Commence customer feedback surveys. Consider a target for customer satisfaction	Medium	Repeat of 6.6.6 and 6.6.7 above 03/01/12 – This has not been a high priority to date with focus on clearing work)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	June 2012 (from June 2011)
7.1.10	Release the written procedures, review with staff working groups to ensure they are adopted.	High	“ACS” Procedure Manual has already been purchased and will be updated on an ongoing process. New post of Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader will be responsible 03/01/12 – Procedure Maps have been sent to ACS so that this resource may be used	Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	
7.1.13 And 3.6.4	Reconcile the benefits system to all other systems such as Council Tax and Finance	High	To be dealt with at the same time as 3.6.2 above 03/01/02 – Now resolved. Measures now in place to enable daily reconciliation	Benefits Manager	March 2011	Yes	
8.1.6	Review the number and types of printers available to ensures they are adequate for the administration and printing requirements	High	Migration to Windows Platform will increase capacity (see 5.3.1) 03/01/02 – Multi-tray printer now in place to enhance printing ability	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	
8.1.7 And 5.3.20	Immediately review the use of the Anite system	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/12 – This has been subject of a number of discussions with Northgate the system providers. Progress is slow but we are continuing to explore how best to use the system	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	Feb 2012 (from Sept 2011)
8.1.8	Provide a PC which can access all systems in the private interview room.	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with CSC 03/01/02 – No longer a priority so deferred to March 2012	Benefit Manager	June 2011	No	March 2012

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
8.1.9	Set up Watford income section users on the Three Rivers systems	Medium	Agreed. Scheduled for completion in June 2011 03/01/02 – Completed with introduction of Income Management System	Income Team Leader	June 2011	Yes	
8.1.11	Harmonise HR policies as soon as possible	High	Corporate initiative underway 03/01/02 – Corporate exercise completed	Head of HR	June 2011	Yes	
8.1.12	Review the web site and bring up to date, identify responsibility for maintenance of the site and web pages	Medium	Agreed. Responsibility assigned and tasks will be completed during 2011/12	Revenues Manager	March 2012	No	

*PART A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 2 February 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Hospital Parking Charges Task Group – Final Report

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This report asks Overview and Scrutiny Committee to endorse the recommendations set out in the final report from the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group recommendations.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,
Committee and Scrutiny Officer
telephone extension: 8377 email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 June 2011 it was agreed to establish a Task Group to consider a proposal suggested by Councillor Karen Collett.

3.2 Councillor Collett's proposal asked that a Task Group was set up to review parking at the hospital and its high charges. The original scope is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

3.3 All Councillors were contacted about the review and asked to inform the Committee and Scrutiny Officer if they were interested in participating in the review.

- 3.4 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26 July 2011 Members were informed that five Councillors had expressed an interest in participating in the review. It was agreed that these Councillors would form the Task Group membership.
- 3.5 The Task Group has met on five occasions, with the last one taking place on Wednesday 4 January. At this meeting the final report and recommendations were agreed for submission to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 If the recommendations are endorsed the final report, including its appendices, will be sent to the Associate Director of Strategic Development and Associate Director of Infrastructure from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust for their consideration. The Task Group also agreed that the report would be sent to the PALS Co-ordinator, who had provided a written response to an enquiry from the Task Group, and to the Mayor, who is Portfolio Holder responsible for partnerships and health.
- 4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**
- 4.1 **Financial**
- 4.1.1 *The Head of Strategic Finance reports that there are no financial implications to the Council arising out of this report.*
- 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)
There are no legal implications for the Council in this report. Members are reminded that the Hospital is under no obligation to implement these recommendations.
- 4.2.1
- 4.3 **Potential Risks**
None identified.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Final report of the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group (*The appendices to the final report are not attached but are available on request from Democratic Services*)

Appendix 2 – Final scope for the review

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

Minutes of the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group's meetings.

File Reference

None

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Watford Borough Council

Councillor Karen Collett .	Chair of the Task Group and Councillor for Woodside Ward
Councillor Ken Brodhurst .	Councillor for Callowland Ward
Councillor Kareen Hastrick .	Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor Peter Jeffree .	Councillor for Park Ward
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux	Councillor for Park Ward

External Support and Information

Watford General Hospital

Eric Fehily . . .	Associate Director of Infrastructure
Kyle McClelland . . .	Associate Director of Strategic Development

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Hamed Zarin	PALS Co-ordinator
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Officer Support

Watford Borough Council

Sandra Hancock	Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Rosy Wassell	Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Information on concessions to be made clearer and available in an information booklet.
2. Parking charges to start at £2.50 for a two hour stay.
3. Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increases in parking charges.
4. Vouchers to be offered in the event that visitors park for longer than their anticipated stay.
5. Pay on exit system to be introduced
6. Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays to be improved.
7. Signage and information on parking areas for visitors to be improved.
8. Signs informing on slippery roads to be installed.
9. Signs to indicate distance to hospital reception to be installed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 June 2011 Members discussed the formation of Task Groups.

Following a proposal by Councillor Karen Collett, it was decided that a Task Group would be established to review "Hospital parking and its high charges" and that the scope be presented at the following meeting.

The scope for the review was approved at the meeting on 26 July 2011.

It was anticipated that the review would establish:

- The basis for the current charges
- The range of parking options and charges for patients, members of patients' families and visitors.
- How parking costs compared with other Trusts locally
- Whether charges were 'reasonable'
- Whether any available options were known and understood by visitors.

At the close of the review, were it to be felt appropriate, recommendations to improve the parking and charging policy could then be forwarded to the Trust.

Prior to the meeting on 26 July 2011, five Councillors had expressed an interest in working on this review; it was agreed that these Councillors would form the membership of the Task Group.

The Task Group would comprise:

Councillor Karen Collett (Proposer) – Councillor for Woodside Ward
Councillor Ken Brodhurst – Councillor for Callowland Ward
Councillor Kareen Hastrick – Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor Peter Jeffree – Councillor for Park Ward
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux – Councillor for Park Ward

First Meeting - 31 August 2011

For information, the Task Group had received the Watford General Hospital Transport and Parking Strategy and the Department of Health's 'Best Practice for the Implementation of Car Parking Charges'. They had also received a list comparing parking charges for hospitals within a 30 mile radius.

It was agreed that the Task Group produce a list of questions for the Associate Director of Infrastructure at Watford Hospital who had advised that he would be willing to attend a meeting in order to answer the group's questions.

Second Meeting - 5 October 2011

Both the Associate Director of Infrastructure and Associate Director of Strategic Development had been able to attend this meeting. They had previously submitted answers to questions from the group and expanded on these during the meeting. The document from the Directors is included within the appendices.

Members agreed that the representative from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) be contacted to discover whether any feedback had been received with regard to parking at the hospital.

Third Meeting - 2 November 2011

The Group had received a letter from the PALS representative which had advised feedback and enquiries on parking provisions and charges at the hospital.

Members discussed:

- parking areas for visitors and staff
- signage
- concessions and information available on the subject
- the starting cost for parking charges
- methods of paying for parking and
- consultation with stakeholders.

Members then compiled a list of Recommendations for consideration.

Fourth Meeting - 1 December 2011

Members had further discussions on the Recommendations decided at the previous meeting.

Members agreed that the Recommendations should form the basis of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be presented at the February 2012 meeting.

Final Meeting - 4 January 2012

Members discussed the draft report and made their final amendments prior to it being presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendation 1 ~ Information on concessions to be made clearer and available in an information booklet.

Members had discussed the issue of concessions and had concluded that information on concessions was not readily available for patients and visitors and that the details that were provided were difficult to understand.

The Hospital Directors had replied that the availability of concessions was advised on:

- each pay and display machine,
- the hospital's website,
- on display boards in each ward,
- adjacent to lifts,
- in posters situated in well used public areas and
- on the concession application form.

Members had agreed that at times of stress, patients and visitors would be unlikely to notice the signs.

With regard to Members' concern that the details on concessions were difficult to understand, the Directors advised that the categories had recently been simplified and consequently more user-friendly and that the website included a simple table including permit types. .

Members noted that the status of 'Active Carer', for whom concessions were available, would be determined by ward staff. It was assumed that visitors would ask whether they could have a concession under this category. Members considered, however, that it would not occur to most visitors that they would have such an entitlement.

Members suggested that an information booklet be provided offering all necessary information and that one such booklet be placed at each bedside and at a stand at the entrance to wards. Topics covered in the booklet could include a definition of who would be entitled to concessions in addition to the website table which explained permit types. Members asked that the term 'active carer' should be clarified in order to make the classification clear.

Members concluded that communication of information on concessions should be more pro-active and recommended that since staff in ward had little or no time to note which users might require this information, the information should be contained in a booklet available to all visitors.

Recommendation 2 ~ Parking charges to start at £2.50 for a two hour stay.

Members had considered the table of charges at other hospitals in the vicinity. They had noticed that charges at Watford General Hospital were the highest in the area at a starting payment of £4.00 for three hours; the daily rate was also considerably higher than at other hospital trusts. Members also compared charges for public car parks in Watford.

The Hospital Directors had advised that the charges reflected demand for parking in the area, the cost for providing parking facilities and the security and management's assessment of the average duration of visits to the site. It was noted that income was balanced against expenditure costs. He added that charges were consistent across the three sites at Hemel Hempstead, St. Albans and Watford.

With regard to the high cost of the first level of payment, the director advised that this cost had been chosen because most patients attended for a typical time span of over two hours. He added that a daily rate would tend to attract commuters and shoppers who would not be visiting the hospital.

Members considered that a parking charge starting at £4.00 for a three hour stay was too high. They decided that a two hour charge would be more reasonable and recommended £2.50 as a sensible fee.

Members also discussed the practice amongst car park users of passing on tickets which had time remaining on them.

Members determined that to start payment for a two hour time span would result in extra revenue for the car park as a lower charge for less time would be more acceptable for visitors. There would also be less time left on a ticket making it less likely that this would be passed on to other users.

Members agreed that they recommend that the parking charges start at £2.50 for two hours.

Recommendation 3 ~ Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increases in parking charges.

At the meeting on 2 November 2011, Members noted that there had been no involvement in policy making and no survey on the raising of charges for parking.

The Task Group agreed that stakeholders should be consulted and that survey forms should be handed to patients whilst they waited for their appointments.

Recommendation 4 ~ Vouchers to be offered in the event that visitors park for longer than their anticipated stay.

Members discussed problems for visitors paying for parking at times of high emotion. The Task Group acknowledged that there would be situations when it was inevitable that visitors were obliged to stay later than they had intended frequently through circumstances beyond their control. Whilst a 'Pay on Exit' scheme would obviate there being any difficulty of exceeding time paid for, it was decided that, under the current system it should be possible to obtain a 'free' card which would enable parking for longer than had been anticipated.

In discussion, one Member advised that the voucher scheme would have inherent problems in that, whilst this was a good idea, it would be difficult to operate as claims would not always be justifiable. Members agreed that information on the voucher scheme should be included in the booklet as recommended in Recommendation 5 above and that vouchers should be offered at the discretion of nursing staff.

Members recommended that a voucher for unexpected car park use should be offered in order to alleviate patient and visitor stress.

Recommendation 5 ~ Pay on Exit system to be introduced

Members discussed the method of collecting parking charges and referred to the practice referred to in Recommendation 6 above whereby unexpired tickets were 'donated' to new arrivals.

A 'Pay on Exit' scheme would be a fairer method of payment and would result in a 100% collection rate. It was noted that in the event of an appointment or visit extending for longer than anticipated, the 'Pay on Exit' system would cause less worry to users concerned that their tickets had expired.

The Directors explained that a 'Pay on Exit' system would not be easy to install at Watford due to the location of the various car parks on the site.

In reply to the suggestion that a 'change station' be re-instated, the Directors advised that in the past the change station had been a regular target for vandalism and theft. The Directors added that a 'Pay by Phone' system had been installed.

The Chair commented that the overwhelming response from users had been that a 'Pay on Exit' system would be the best option for payment.

Members agreed that they would recommend that a 'Pay on Exit' system be installed.

Recommendation 6 ~ Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays be improved.

During discussions on charges for parking, the Directors advised that '30 minute' parking bays were provided free of charge. They had advised that the Trust was attempting to improve the locations and signage of these bays.

Members agreed that signs to indicate where these bays were located were poorly situated and needed to be improved.

Recommendation 7 ~ Signage and information on parking areas for visitors could be improved.

Members discussed the parking areas for visitors and staff, several Members noting that it was unclear which parts of the car park were for staff and which for visitors.

Members agreed that signage was required to explain where visitors were allowed to park. Clear signs to indicate where the 63 'free' spaces for disabled users were located would also be wise.

Recommendation 8 ~ Signs informing on slippery roads to be installed.

Members noted the steep slope in the car park which could be hazardous in bad weather.

Members recommended that signs be installed to warn of slippery roads.

Recommendation 9 ~ Signs to indicate distance to hospital reception to be installed

Following the recommendation on signs to warn of hazardous conditions, Members considered that signs to indicate distance to the main hospital entrance would be wise.

Other matters of concern to the Group

- Parking Charges for Staff

Members discussed parking charges for staff working at the hospital which were relatively low. The Directors had explained charging policy for staff and had demonstrated how these fees were calculated. Directors had added that parking costs were calculated in order to balance expenditure against income.

Members agreed that revenue was required but questioned whether it was fair that the charge to the public was high compared to that of the staff and agreed that it would be wise to balance the relative costs of staff and visitors to the hospital in a fairer way. One Member advocated a 'progressive' charging system for staff in order to protect lower paid staff.

The Task Group noted that the Directors had advised that Hospital Management intended to review charges for staff.

Members wished to record their support for this review which would hopefully ensure overall balance in charges for all users. They also asked that the review considers ensuring that charges for staff should be progressive.

- Availability of Information

Members suggested that information and help should be available at the hospital reception desk.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDICES

Bibliography

The following two documents were found to be useful

1. Department of Health Income Generation Car Parking charges ~ Best Practice for Implementation:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_062854.pdf

2. West Herts Hospitals' Transport and Parking Strategy:

http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/about/documents/WHHT_Transport_parking_strategy_version1.pdf

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Scrutiny Review final Scope
- Appendix 2: Site map of Watford Hospital
- Appendix 3: Other Hospital Car Parking Charges
- Appendix 4: 'Harlequin' car park charges
- Appendix 5: Town centre car park charges
- Appendix 6: Letter from Patient Advice Liaison Service
- Appendix 7: Minutes 31.08.2011
- Appendix 8: Minutes 05.10.2011
- Appendix 9: Minutes 02.11.2011
- Appendix 10: Minutes 01.12.2011
- Appendix 11 Minutes 04.01.2012

Scrutiny Review – Final scope

Proposer: Councillor/Officer Councillor Karen Collett	
Topic for scrutiny:	<p>West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust - charges for parking at Watford General Hospital</p> <p>To review the present charging policy to establish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basis for the current charges. • The range of parking options and charges for patients, members of patients' families and visitors,
Why has this topic been recommended for scrutiny?	Cllr Collett feels that Watford residents are penalised for using the hospital's services.
What are the specific outcomes the proposer wishes to see from the review?	<p>To establish how they compare with other Trusts locally and further afield; whether they are "reasonable"; if there are options are they known and understood by visitors?</p> <p>If appropriate, to make such recommendations to improve the Trust's parking and charging policy</p>
Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?	
It must affect a group or community of people	Patients, their families and their visitors coming to Watford General Hospital.
It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake	Healthcare and parking in Vicarage Ward

It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months	Conforms.
It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee	Conforms.
Does the topic meet the council's priorities?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the health of the town and enhance its heritage 2. Enhance the town's 'clean & green' environment 3. Enhance the town's sustainability 4. Enhance the town's economic prosperity and potential 5. Supporting individuals and the community 6. Securing an efficient, effective, value for money council 7. Influence and partnership delivery
Are you aware of any limitations of time or other constraints which need to be taken into account?	No
Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?	West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Please complete the 'sign off' section at the end of this document	

The following section to be completed by Democratic Services	
<p>Consultation with relevant Heads of Service <i>(this section to be completed by Democratic Services)</i></p>	<p><i>It is important to ensure that the relevant service can support a review by providing the necessary documents and attending meetings as necessary. The Head of Service's comments should be obtained before the request to hold a review is put to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</i></p>
<p>Has the relevant Head of Service been consulted?</p> <p>Is this a topic which the service department(s) is able to support.</p> <p>When was the last time this service was the subject of a scrutiny review?</p>	<p><i>Yes/no (if no, please give reason)</i></p> <p><i>Include HoS comments here:</i></p> <p>Never</p>

Scope Sign off			
<p>Councillor/Officer M A Watkin, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>	<p>Date 26/7/2011</p>	<p>Head of Service</p>	<p>date</p>

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*PART A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 2 February 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Forward Plan

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report sets out the changes to the latest Forward Plan when compared to the information presented at the last meeting.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the Forward Plan and considers whether there are any items it wishes to review further.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,
Committee and Scrutiny Officer
telephone extension: 8377 email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Carol Chen, Head of Legal and Property Services

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council is required to publish a Forward Plan of key decisions it is proposed will be taken within the next four months.

3.2 The Forward Plan indicates the nature of the key decision proposed; the contact officer; the proposed decision maker and those people and organisations who have been consulted.

3.3 New additions to the Forward Plan since the December 2011 – March 2012 edition (issued 16 November)

There are four new items which have been added to the Forward Plan since the information published in the Scrutiny Committee's report for the meeting on 24 November 2011.

- Draft revenue and capital estimates for 2012/16 – added to the edition issued in December for consideration by Cabinet in January. (Also refer to paragraph 3.5)
- Delegated decision on the 2011-2012 Annual Funding Programme applications – added to the edition issued in December for consideration by the Portfolio Holder for Community Services by the end of January. (Also refer to paragraph 3.5)
- Agreement of the Council's equalities objectives 2012-15 – added to the edition issued in December for consideration by Cabinet in February. (Also refer to paragraph 3.4)
- Corporate Plan 2012-16 – added to the edition issued in December for consideration by Cabinet in February. (Also refer to paragraph 3.4)

3.4 Amendments to the Forward Plan since the December 2011 – March 2012 edition (issued 16 November)

There have been four amendments to the Forward Plan since the information published in the Scrutiny Committee's report for the meeting held on 24 November 2011. As Cabinet in February has been cancelled, a number of reports have slipped to March:

- Approval of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy – amended in the edition issued in January. The policy is to be considered by Cabinet in March 2012 instead of February 2012. Originally this decision was due to be considered in November 2011.
- Adoption of the Framework and 5-year action plan for allotments across the Borough – amended in the edition issued in January. The report is to be considered by Cabinet in March 2012 instead of February 2012. Originally this decision was due to be considered in November 2011.
- Corporate Plan 2012-16 – amended in the edition issued in January. The report is to be considered by Cabinet in March 2012 instead of February 2012.
- Agreement of the Council's equalities objectives 2012-15 – amended in the edition issued in January. The report is to be considered by Cabinet in March 2012 instead of February 2012.

3.5 Deletions from the Forward Plan

The following items have been deleted from the Forward Plan since the edition reviewed at the September meeting.

- Report on the findings of the corporate channel shift project – delegated decision taken by the Executive Director Resources on 21 November 2011.
- Delegated approval to select the preferred bidder in connection with the disposal of land at Gammons Farm Close at less than best consideration. For the purpose of providing affordable housing – delegated decision taken by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Legal and Property Services on 5 December 2011.
- To decide whether to approve the recommendations of the Housing Value for Money Review Phase 2 – considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2011.
- Approval of the Watford Character of the Area Study – considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2011.
- To approve the voluntary sector funding review for 2012/13 – considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2011. This decision was subsequently called in by Councillors Bell, Brodhurst and Khan. Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 22 December to consider the call-in and review the decision. The Scrutiny Committee agreed to ratify Cabinet's decision.
- Croxley Rail Link: Proposed temporary works compounds and transfer of parcels of land to London Underground Limited (LUL) – considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2011.
- To award contract for maintenance of the Council's fleet of vehicles, plant and equipment for a 2 year period with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year – delegated decision taken by the Head of Environmental Services on 5 January 2012.
- Approval of the Herts Waste Partnership Agreement – delegated decision taken by the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services on 13 January 2012.
- Approval of the proposed Macdonnell Gardens Conservation Area – considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 January 2012.
- Draft revenue and capital estimates for 2012/16 – considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 January 2012 and recommended to Council for its meeting on 25 January 2012.

- Delegated decision on the 2011-2012 Annual Funding Programme applications – delegated decision due to be taken by the Portfolio Holder for Community Services by the end of January 2012. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer will provide further information at the meeting.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 Whilst a number of reports considered by the Scrutiny Committee will have had financial implications, the scrutiny role in itself, should result in no additional external costs being incurred.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Legal and Property Services comments that if Overview and Scrutiny wish to consider any proposed decision it needs to be mindful of when it is proposed that the decision be taken and ensure that it has completed its work prior to that time in order to be able to contribute to the decision maker's deliberations.

4.3 **Potential Risks** None identified.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

November 2011, December 2011 and January 2012 editions of the Watford Borough Council Forward Plan

File Reference

None

*PART A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 2 February 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Previous Review Update: Services for the Deceased

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the Services for the Deceased review recommendations, as requested by Policy Development Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 22 February 2011.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the latest update and considers whether the Task Group's recommendations have been met.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,
Committee and Scrutiny Officer
telephone extension: 8377 email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Policy Development Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting on 15 June 2010 to establish a Task Group to review the services provided at the town's cemeteries. The original suggestion had been put forward by the Leadership Team.
- 3.2 The purpose of this review was to look at the current provision of services and to establish the future needs of the borough.
- 3.3 The Task Group's recommendations were forwarded to Cabinet and were considered at its meeting held on 13 December 2010.
- 3.4 Policy Development Scrutiny Committee reviewed Cabinet's response at its meetings held on 18 January and 22 February 2011.

- 3.5 The meeting on 18 January 2011 reviewed an action plan which had been drawn up by Community Services and each action was linked to the Task Group's recommendations and Cabinet's response. It was agreed at the meeting that the Task Group Chair, Councillor Watkin, would review the actions and add the relevant officer and the date the individual recommendation should be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 At the meeting on 22 February 2011 the Scrutiny Committee reviewed the action plan and agreed to review the actions in a year. The action plan is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 3.7 Appendix 1 sets out the original recommendations; the responses from Cabinet and officers and the Scrutiny Committee's comments and resolutions. It also includes the latest update from the Head of Community Services.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 Should any recommendations involve either capital or revenue implications then the approval of Cabinet would be required.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

4.3 **Potential Risks**

- 4.3.1 None identified.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Services for the Deceased review update

Appendix 2 – Action Plan considered by Policy Development Scrutiny Committee (18 January and 22 February 2011)

Appendix 3 – minutes of Cabinet (13 December 2010) and Policy Development Scrutiny Committee (18 January and 22 February 2011)

Background Papers

Services for the Deceased final report

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 December 2010 and the responses to the individual recommendations

Minutes of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 18 January and 22 February 2011

File Reference

None

Review: Services for the Deceased
Committee/Task Group: Policy Development Task Group
Final report published: 9 November 2010
Cabinet/Executive response: 13 December 2010 (Considered by Policy Development 18 January and 22 February 2011)
Chair: Councillor Mark Watkin

Recommendations	Cabinet/Executive response/decision (13 December 2010)	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
That the Council continues to provide a wide range of services for the deceased, even though it only has a statutory responsibility to provide for the burial and cremation of any deceased person without relatives or other means of arranging burials or cremation. This is subject to our financial viability recommendation.	We recognise the importance of continuing to provide a wide range of services for the deceased and welcome your comments on financial viability	Action Plan circulated at the meeting. The report was deferred to allow the Task Group Chair to complete the action plan. <i>(18 January 2011)</i> The Scrutiny Committee discussed the completed action plan and resolved to review the actions within a year. <i>(22 February 2011)</i>		

Recommendations	Cabinet/Executive response/decision (13 December 2010)	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
That the Council should aim to make the cemeteries self-financing in the next five years.	Recommendations have been put forward under the Councils service prioritisation programme to make the cemetery closer to self financing		Burial fees increased by 100% following service prioritisation.	Ongoing
That the pricing structure be reviewed to ensure that it is simple to understand and that the costs of individual services reflect the cost to the Council.	Pricing structures were simplified in 2009/10 and the cemetery manager will seek to simplify the presentation of the fees further for the future. It is a complex service with many options available, which combined with the desire to self finance will require a degree of complexity to be retained. Wherever possible, the range of fees and charges will be simplified, but it is important to ensure a broad choice for bereaved as well as aiming to recover full costs wherever appropriate.		Burial fees increased by 100% following service prioritisation.	

Recommendations	Cabinet/Executive response/decision (13 December 2010)	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
<p>That officers look further at the areas of the Charter for the Bereaved which could be easily implemented at Watford in order to improve the Council's national ranking, for example, providing a written explanation of 'buying' a grave to purchasers.</p>	<p>Actions to improve our national ranking in the Charter for the Bereaved are already under way</p>		<p>Last charter update submitted Sept 2011. Increased to 432 points – 28 points above 2010 score.</p> <p>Rankings are now listed as bronze , silver and gold rather than highest and lowest score, Watford are in the bronze section but will continue to increase scores to aim for silver level</p>	

Recommendations	Cabinet/Executive response/decision (13 December 2010)	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
<p>That the Council investigates the feasibility of extending the times during which burials can take place. This would mean operating an 'on call' system on Saturdays for the digging staff. The extra cost to this service would need to be reflected in a revised pricing structure.</p>	<p>Extending opening hours will be investigated by the cemetery manager, however, this is an extension to service that will increase costs and will also be more difficult with the reduced core staffing structure that is proposed to meet the service prioritisation savings required by the Council. The cemetery manager will aim to strike an appropriate balance between cost, service availability and the conflicting needs of different cemetery faiths.</p>		<p>Meeting held with Services Director, Cllr. Asif Khan and Section Head for Parks and Open Spaces. Section Head has written a report on the findings and costings of the options available and options currently being discussed. Options subject to costs.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>That the Council continues with the policy of not allowing the pre-purchase of graves.</p>	<p>The pre purchase of graves can cause significant additional digging costs (as some need to be hand dug) and Officers support the recommendation to continue the policy of not allowing pre purchase.</p>		<p>No pre-purchasing of graves is allowed.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Recommendations	Cabinet/Executive response/decision (13 December 2010)	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
That officers research the logistics of allowing shroud burials within the cemeteries and put in place the requisite measures for shroud burials to be catered for in the future.	The Cemetery manager has begun investigating the potential for shroud burials and would expect to report back her findings early in 2011, so that they can be considered and a formal policy implemented.		Meeting held with members of the Muslim Community. Agreement was reached as to how we can accommodate shroud burials. These can be accommodated as soon as possible without any major impact to service delivery.	Ongoing
That the Council considers developing the woodland areas of North Watford Cemetery to allow for the scattering of ashes there.	The potential use of the woodlands for scattering of ashes will be investigated at the same time, so a decision can be made and implemented upon this too.		Scattering of ashes has been discussed. To date, we have received no requests to carry this out as the majority of families wish for a permanent plot where a memorial can be erected. Ongoing discussions taking place with Southern Green Landscape Architects who are developing a Masterplan for the cemetery. This may include some sort of memorial garden. We are currently already able to scatter ashes if required but it maybe that the need is just not there.	Ongoing

Recommendations	Cabinet/Executive response/decision (13 December 2010)	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
That green burial grounds be included in the planning for future cemetery sites.	The future cemetery provision will need to be resolved in the next few years, as it takes a significant time to develop alternative arrangements and a new site (should this be the outcome). Officers would recommend investigating a green burial site and a new cemetery site in 2012. This will allow the Council sufficient time to consider its decisions carefully and to plan for the future in good time.		Discussions already held with planning under future site allocations and options discussed.	Ongoing
That the Council starts future planning to identify a future site for the cemetery within the next few years due to the scarcity of available land and the cost (at least £1 million).			Discussions already held with planning under future site allocations and options discussed.	Ongoing

The completed action plan (referred to at the Policy Development Scrutiny Committees in January and February 2011) is attached at Appendix 2.

The minutes of Cabinet (13 December 2010) and Policy Development Scrutiny Committee (18 January and 22 February 2011) are attached at Appendix 3.

Action Plan

Recommendation	Cabinet response	Action by	Date for review
<p>1. That the Council continues to provide a wide range of services for the deceased, even though it only has a statutory responsibility to provide for the burial and cremation of any deceased person without relatives or other means of arranging burials or cremation. This is subject to our financial viability recommendation (see para 3.2)</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of continuing to provide a wide range of services for the deceased and welcome your comments on financial viability</p>	<p>No action required as service will continue, subject to financial viability</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2. That the council should aim to make the cemeteries self-financing in the next five years.</p>	<p>Recommendations have been put forward under the Councils service prioritisation programme to make the cemetery closer to self financing</p>	<p>Cemetery Manager and Parks & Open Spaces Section Head</p>	<p>Will be kept under review at each annual budget monitoring round in Sept/Oct</p>
<p>3. That the pricing structure be reviewed to ensure that it is simple to understand and that the costs of individual services reflect the cost to the council.</p>	<p>Pricing structures were simplified in 2009/10 and the cemetery manager will seek to simplify the presentation of the fees further for the future. It is a complex service with many options available, which combined with the desire to self finance will require a degree of complexity to be retained. Wherever possible, the range of fees and charges will be simplified, but it is important to ensure a broad choice for bereaved as well as aiming to recover full costs wherever appropriate.</p>	<p>Cemetery Manager</p>	<p>Will be reviewed as part of each annual budget monitoring round in Sept/Oct</p>

Recommendation	Cabinet response	Action by	Date for review
4. That officers look further at the areas of the Charter for the Bereaved which could be easily implemented at Watford in order to improve the council's national ranking, for example, providing a written explanation of 'buying' a grave to purchasers.	Actions to improve our national ranking in the Charter for the Bereaved are already under way	Cemetery Manager	Progress to be reviewed at quarterly Parks Management Team meetings and annual review to summarise achievements by 31 st March 2012
5. That the council investigates the feasibility of extending the times during which burials can take place. This would mean operating an 'on call' system on Saturdays for the digging staff. The extra cost to this service would need to be reflected in a revised pricing structure.	Extending opening hours will be investigated by the cemetery manager, however, this is an extension to service that will increase costs and will also be more difficult with the reduced core staffing structure that is proposed to meet the service prioritisation savings required by the Council. The cemetery manager will aim to strike an appropriate balance between cost, service availability and the conflicting needs of different cemetery faiths.	Cemetery Manager	Progress to be monitored at quarterly Parks Management Team meetings and proposals submitted identifying any cost issues by Sept 2011.
6. That the council continues with the policy of not allowing the pre-purchase of graves.	The pre purchase of graves can cause significant additional digging costs (as some need to be hand dug) and Officers support the recommendation to continue the policy of not allowing pre purchase.	Policy continuing	Not applicable
7. That officers research the logistics of allowing shroud burials within the cemeteries and put in place the requisite measures for shroud burials to be catered for in the future.	The Cemetery manager has begun investigating the potential for shroud burials and would expect to report back her findings in Spring 2011, so that they can be considered and a formal policy implemented.	Cemetery Manager	Progress to be reviewed at quarterly Parks Management Team meetings and changed policy implementation to be timetabled

Recommendation	Cabinet response	Action by	Date for review
8. That the council considers developing the woodland areas of North Watford Cemetery to allow for the scattering of ashes there.	The potential use of the woodlands for scattering of ashes will be investigated at the same time, so a decision can be made and implemented upon this too.	Cemetery Manager	Initial discussions held at Parks Management meeting 31/1/11. Progress on identifying how this links to memorial proposals in Service Prioritisation project to be monitored at monthly meetings.
9. That green burial grounds be included in the planning for future cemetery sites.	The future cemetery provision will need to be resolved in the next few years, as it takes a significant time to develop alternative arrangements and a new site (should this be the outcome). Officers would recommend investigating a green burial site and a new cemetery site in 2012. This will allow the Council sufficient time to consider its decisions carefully and to plan for the future in good time.	Planning Strategy/ Parks Section Head	To be agreed with Planning colleagues
10. That the council starts future planning to identify a future site for the cemetery within the next few years due to the scarcity of available land and the cost (at least £1 million).	As above.	Planning Strategy/ Parks Section Head	To be agreed with Planning colleagues

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Extracts from minutes

Cabinet – 13 December 2011

C41 SERVICES FOR THE DECEASED REVIEW (Forward Plan ref: CS252)
10/11

As part of its 2010/11 work programme the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee established a Task-group to undertake a review of the Council's services for the deceased. The purpose of the review was to look at the current provision of services and establish future needs of the borough.

Cabinet received a report presenting the findings of the review. The Cabinet response to the recommendations was circulated at the meeting.

The Chair of the Task Group introduced the report. He drew Cabinet's attention to two specific issues which had come out of the review: The impact of the service on the budget and the fact that space was running out.

He commended Watford's Cemetery service which he described as "excellent". He went on to talk about comparisons with other authorities they had visited; the need for quick burials for certain faith groups, including weekend burials; costs and long term sustainability. He referred to the Head of Strategic Finance's comments in the cover report relating to the need to recognise that the Council would have to identify significant savings in the next four years and that there may be a need to focus on statutory rather than discretionary provisions. The Chair of the Task Group said that the statutory provision only related to the very poor (as in the old "paupers graves") and that he would struggle to find this approach satisfactory.

The Mayor thanked the task group for carrying out a thorough and timely piece of work which would assist with decision making. She added that, in face to face conversations she had had, people had considered that the service should not be so heavily subsidised. She also welcomed the opportunity to address some of the cultural issues around burials.

A non Cabinet Member (Labour) said he welcomed the report especially the reference to weekend burials. He agreed that costs would have to be looked at.

Another non Cabinet Member (Conservative) also referred to costs and the fact that some of the charges did not represent the true cost for the Council. The Mayor said that hand digging was an example of this. The Chair of the Task Group added that, in some situations especially where plots had been purchased in advance, it was not possible to use mechanical equipment due to proximity to other graves.

A Cabinet Member concluded the discussion by advising some caution with regard to the use of woodland: There was some ancient woodland in the borough which needed to be protected.

RESOLVED

that Cabinet's responses to the recommendations in the report, as attached as Appendix A to these minutes, be noted and action taken as appropriate.

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2011

PDS52- SERVICES FOR THE DECEASED – CABINET RESPONSE 10/11

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnership and Performance Section Head including Cabinet's response to the Services for the Deceased review. The Scrutiny Support Officer circulated a draft action plan.

The Vice-Chair, who had chaired the Task Group, suggested that he should consider the recommendations and add the relevant officer and date the Scrutiny Committee felt the individual recommendations should be reviewed. The information could then be circulated to the other members of the Scrutiny Committee.

It was suggested that this item should be deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED –

that the report be deferred to the next meeting enabling the Vice-Chair to complete the action plan and circulate it to the other members.

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee – 22 February 2011

PDS58- TASK GROUP UPDATE – REVIEW OF THE SERVICES FOR THE 10/11 DECEASED ACTION PLAN

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnership and Performance Section Head, including an action plan of the recommendations from the review, which had been completed by Community Services.

The Vice-Chair, who had chaired this Task Group, said that the action plan had been clearly set out. He had noted that Cabinet had said that the cemetery would move towards self-financing although the Task Group had recommended this should happen within five years. He suggested that the review should be carried out within nine months or a year.

The Chair referred to recommendation 5 and asked how this would be monitored. She suggested that the number of requests could be monitored and how many were accommodated.

The Vice-Chair responded that he was unsure the service had the resources to do the monitoring. This question had not been asked during the review.

The Chair commented that officers had provided good responses to the recommendations.

RESOLVED –

that the actions from the Services for the Deceased report be reviewed within a year.

*PART A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 2 February 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Previous Review Update: Future of the Colosseum

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides an update on the Future of the Colosseum review recommendations which were last reviewed by Policy Development Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 10 July 2007.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 that Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the latest update and considers whether the Task Group's recommendations have been met.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,
Committee and Scrutiny Officer
telephone extension: 8377 email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Carol Chen, Head of Legal and Property Services

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 Policy Development Scrutiny Committee agreed to review the future of the Colosseum at its meeting on 11 July 2006.

3.2 The purpose of this review was to look at the future of the Colosseum both as a building and as a facility.

3.3 The Scrutiny Committee agreed the final draft of the report at its meeting on 8 January 2007 which was then forwarded to Cabinet for consideration on 26

February 2007. Cabinet had required officers to carry out further work and a further report was considered at Cabinet's meeting on 18 June 2007.

- 3.4 Policy Development Scrutiny Committee reviewed Cabinet's response at its meetings held on 10 July 2007.
- 3.5 This year Overview and Scrutiny Committee has decided to review previous reports and consider whether there are any outstanding recommendations which still need to be implemented. This is the first such review and others will be included in the work programme for future meetings.
- 3.6 Appendix 1 sets out the original recommendations; the responses from Cabinet and officers and the Scrutiny Committee's comments and resolutions. It also includes the latest update from the Executive Director Services.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Future of the Colosseum review update

Background Papers

Future of the Colosseum final report published in January 2007
Minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 26 February and 18 June 2007
Minutes of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 11 July 2006, 8 January 2007 and 10 July 2007

File Reference

None

Review: Future of the Colosseum
Committee/Task Group: Policy Development Scrutiny Committee
Final report published: January 2007
Cabinet/Executive response: 26 February 2007 and 18 June 2007
Scrutiny Review: Policy Development Scrutiny Committee 10 July 2007
Chair: Councillor George Derbyshire

Recommendation	Cabinet/Executive response/decision	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
That the restoration as soon as possible of the Colosseum venue as a fully operational public performance venue with a regular wide-ranging programme of events be adopted as a significant element of the Council's cultural policy.	That the restoration as soon as possible of the Colosseum venue as a fully operational public performance venue with a regular wide-ranging programme of events be adopted as a significant element of the Council's cultural policy. (26/02/2007)	That Cabinet's response be noted. (10/07/07)	Venue opened in August 2011 following substantial refurbishment including a new extension to accommodate proper audience facilities. It provides a wide ranging entertainment programme, conference facilities, bar, café and restaurant	

Recommendation	Cabinet/Executive response/decision	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
That a new name be adopted for the re-launch, with majority preference for Watford Town Hall and minority preference for something with a more modern feel.	That a new name be adopted for the re-launch. (26/02/2007)		During the development of the plans for the new facility it became clear that there was no real advantage to changing the name and in fact there was an advantage to talk about the rebirth of the Colosseum, which was a well known name	
That the options to be considered for the management and operation of the venue when re-launched should be the Southampton and Basingstoke models and that value for money and mitigation of risk should be significant considerations.	That the options to be considered for the management and operation of the venue when re-launched should be the Southampton and Basingstoke models and that value for money and mitigation of risk should be significant considerations. (26/02/2007)		The model arrived at results in a management fee being paid to HQ Theatres to operate the venue (Southampton model). The commercial risk sits with HQ Theatres. The management contract provides for flexibility in the programme but specifies the number of public performances required and the facility to provide community lets at a price agreed with WBC.	
	That officers carry out further work and report back to Cabinet at its June meeting. (26/02/2007)		Various reports were made to cabinet covering the key decision making points in the procurement of the operator	

Recommendation	Cabinet/Executive response/decision	Scrutiny follow-up	Latest update	Further review required / completed
	That the Council should retain ownership of the Colosseum and let a management contract operate the facility for the long term. (18/06/2007)		The Council has retained ownership of the Colosseum and it is leased to the operator for the duration of the management contract	
	That the approach set out in the report for appointing a suitable consultant to advise and prepare tender documentation to let a management contract for the Colosseum by May 2008 be endorsed. (18/06/2007)		Max Associates was the consultant appointed following a procurement process to advise WBC and prepare the tender documentation.	
	That the licence agreement with the BBC to no later than 30 April 2010 be re-negotiated, including a six month break clause to enable the contract to be terminated should the benefits of the contract with the BBC not be compatible with the future operational plans and development proposals for the Colosseum. (18/06/2007)		The licence agreement with the BBC has been terminated and the BBC now have an agreement directly with HQ Theatres which has been approved by WBC	

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PART A

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 2 February 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Work Programme and Annual Report 2011/12

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides an update on the current work programme for 2011/12. The Scrutiny Committee is also requested to consider the information it might wish to be included in the Annual Report 2011/12.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 that the latest version of the work programme be noted.

2.2 that the Scrutiny Committee's comments about the Annual Report be noted.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,
Committee and Scrutiny Officer
telephone extension: 8377 email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 The latest version of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer has updated the Programme taking into account Members' comments and decisions at previous meetings.

3.2 **Annual Report 2011/12**

3.3 Each year Watford Borough Council produces an Annual report which includes a synopsis of the scrutiny work undertaken throughout the year and commentaries from each of the Scrutiny Chairs.

- 3.4 An extract of the 2010/11 Annual Report is attached for information at Appendix 2.
- 3.5 Members are asked to consider what information should be included in the section dedicated to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 The Committee and Scrutiny Officer will prepare a draft of the Overview and Scrutiny Section for consideration at the next meeting.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that the implications of any detailed scrutiny review would need to be considered on an individual basis. It is unlikely however that any incidental expenditure could not be contained within existing estimates.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Legal and Property Services comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

4.3 **Staffing**

- 4.3.1 Democratic Services is able to manage two time-limited Task Groups at any one time to ensure there is capacity within the team to manage the meetings.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2011/12

Appendix 2 – Extract of the 2010/11 Annual Report

Background Papers

Minutes of previous meetings

The Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny in Watford Borough Council
2010/11

File Reference

None



MEMBERSHIP 2011/12

Councillor Mark Watkin (Chair)
Councillor Steve Rackett (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Nigel Bell, Sue Greenslade, Kareen Hastrick, Peter Jeffree, Stephen Johnson, Rabi Martins, Kelly McLeod

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2011/12

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PROGRAMME OF WORK 2011/12

INTRODUCTION

The work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a live document which will be managed throughout the year. Items may be added or deleted as the year progresses at the discretion of the Committee.

The Committee's work programme is centred on:

- i. Call in of Cabinet decisions (as necessary).
- ii. Reviewing the Cabinet's Forward Plan
- iii. Monitoring of the Council's performance (through regularly produced performance reports and measures).
- iv. Reviewing progress on all agreed recommendations of review work on a regular basis.

The Scrutiny Committee will set up time limited task groups to examine issues in depth. Upon conclusion of the assigned task, task groups will report their findings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for ratification.

HOW DO I RAISE AN ISSUE?

If you would like to raise an issue with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, please contact Sandra Hancock, Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Telephone: 01923 278377
Email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

Meeting 1 – 23 June 2011

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Call-in	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in			None
2010/11 Quarter 4 Performance Management Report (Partnerships and Performance Section Head)	Regular review of the Council's performance		Report	Actions to be completed for next meeting report considered
Voluntary Sector Task Group – Cabinet response (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To consider the response from Cabinet and consider any further action.		Report and Cabinet response	
Community Safety Partnership Task Group	To agree the membership of the Task Group		Report	Task Group membership agreed.
Budget Panel update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the Panel		Report	Report noted.
Forward Plan (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Executive's Forward Plan		Report including the latest edition of the Forward Plan	Report noted.
Work Programme (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Agree the rolling work programme and identify suitable topics for further investigation by time limited task groups		Report and draft work programme	The scrutiny suggestions were considered and it was agreed to establish a Task Group to look at the Hospital Parking Charges at Watford General Hospital.

Meeting 2 – 26 July 2011
Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Update from previous meeting (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To review the update of the actions			Actions agreed for future meetings
Call-in	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in			None
Affordable Housing review – Cabinet response (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Cabinet response and consider any further action.		Report and Cabinet response	Actions agreed and added to the rolling action plan
Community Safety Partnership Task Group (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Update on the Task Group			Task Group membership agreed. First meeting to be arranged.
Budget Panel update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the Panel		Report	Agreed this item would only be included when a recommendation has been forwarded from the Panel for approval.
Forward Plan (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Executive's Forward Plan		Report including the latest edition of the Forward Plan	Report noted.
Work Programme and Task Groups (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the rolling work programme and amend as required		Report and latest work programme	Hospital Parking Charges Task Group membership confirmed. First meeting to be arranged. Draft Property Policy review scope to be drawn up.

Meeting 3 – 21 September 2011

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Outstanding actions (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To review the outstanding actions and questions		Updated Outstanding Actions and Questions document.	Noted actions and responses to previous questions.
2011/12 Quarter 1 Performance Management Report (Partnerships and Performance Section Head)	Regular review of the Council's performance		Report	Report discussed and further information requested
Community Safety Partnership Task Group update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To note the progress of the task Group.		Verbal update	Scrutiny Committee informed the first meeting had taken place. The presentation to be circulated to all Councillors.
Hospital Parking Task Group update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the current Task Group(s)		Verbal update	Further meeting held and another arranged.
Forward Plan (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Executive's Forward Plan		Report including the latest edition of the Forward Plan.	Report noted
Work Programme (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Agree the rolling work programme and identify suitable topics for further investigation by time limited task groups		Report and draft work programme	Reviewed 2 further scrutiny suggestions. List of previous scrutiny reports received and Members asked to identify those that need further consideration.

Meeting 4 – 24 November 2011

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Future Council	To consider a scrutiny suggestion from the Managing Director		Report from the Managing Director	The Managing Director attended the meeting and it was agreed to set up a Task Group to review the provision of future council services.
Call-in	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in			None
Outstanding actions (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To review the outstanding actions and questions		Updated Outstanding Actions and Questions document.	Noted actions and responses to previous questions.
2011/12 Quarter 2 Performance Management Report (Partnerships and Performance Section Head)	Regular review of the Council's performance		Report	Report discussed and further information requested. The Head of Revenues and Benefits to be invited to the next meeting.
Community Safety Partnership Task Group update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the Task Group			Scrutiny Committee updated on the work of the Task Group.
Hospital Parking Task Group update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the current Task Group		Report	Scrutiny Committee updated on the work of the Task Group. Final report due to be presented at the February meeting.

Meeting 4 – 24 November 2011

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Forward Plan (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Executive's Forward Plan		Report including the latest edition of the Forward Plan	Report noted.
Previous review update Public Pride (Environmental Services)	Policy Development Scrutiny Committee (January 2011) requested an update on recommendations 6 and 7 of the Public Pride report		Report	Latest update noted and further clarification sought on the Head of Environmental Services comments.
Work Programme (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the rolling work programme and amend as required		Report and latest work programme	Agreed 2 further Task Groups – Future Council Service Delivery and a review of the Recycling Scheme. Priority of previous reviews agreed.

Meeting 5 – 22 December 2011

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Call-in	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in		Report and accompanying documentation presented to Cabinet.	“Review of three year grant funding programme to achieves savings” called in by 3 non-executive Councillors. Decision considered and ratified by Scrutiny Committee.

Meeting 6 – 2 February 2012

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Outstanding actions (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To review the outstanding actions and questions		Updated Outstanding Actions and Questions document.	
Call-in	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in		Report and accompanying documentation presented to the decision-maker.	
“Hospital Parking Charges” Task Group – Final Report (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To endorse the Task Group’s recommendations and report.		Task Group’s final report	
“Review of Recycling Systems” Task Group – Update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the Task Group’s work.		Verbal update	
“The Way Ahead for Council Services” Task Group – Update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the Task Group’s work.		Verbal update	
Community Safety Partnership Task Group update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the Task Group		Verbal update	
Forward Plan (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Executive’s Forward Plan		Report	

Meeting 6 – 2 February 2012

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Previous review update – Services for the Deceased (Community Services)	Policy Development Scrutiny Committee (February 2011) requested an update on the recommendations from the Services for the Deceased report		Report and update	
Previous review update – Future of the Colosseum (Executive Director Services)	To review the latest update to the recommendations included in the final report		Report and update	
Work Programme and Annual report (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the rolling work programme and consider the information to be included in the Annual Report for 2011/12		Report and latest work programme	

Meeting 7 – 7 March 2012

Committee Room / 7.00 pm.

AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Outstanding actions (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	To review the outstanding actions and questions		Updated Outstanding Actions and Questions document.	
Call-in	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in			
2011/12 Quarter 3 Performance Management Report (Partnerships and Performance Section Head)	Regular review of the Council's performance		Report	
Forward Plan (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Review the Executive's Forward Plan		Report including the latest edition of the Forward Plan	
Task Group updates (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the current Task Group(s)		Report	
Previous review update	Monitor the agreed recommendations from a previous review			
Work Programme (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the rolling work programme and amend as required		Report and latest work programme	
Community Safety Partnership Task Group update (Committee and Scrutiny Officer)	Monitor the work undertaken by the Task Group			

Meeting 8 – 29 March 2012 <i>Committee Room / 7.00 pm.</i>				
AGENDA ITEM AND REPORT PROVIDER	REASONS FOR INCLUSION ON AGENDA	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	REQUIREMENTS	FOLLOW UP / PROGRESS
Call-in (if required)	Consideration of Executive decision(s) called in			

Items for consideration in 2012/13

20011/12 Quarter 4 Performance report (June)

Voluntary Sector Task Group recommendations to be reviewed (July)

Affordable Housing Review – Status of Core Strategy to be reviewed (July)

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Extract from the Annual Report 2010/11

2. Policy Development Scrutiny Committee**Membership:**

Councillor McLeod (Chair)

Councillor Watkin (Vice Chair)

Councillors Collett, Counter, Forest, Greenslade, Lovejoy, Meerabux and Taj

2.1 The Committee's work programme for 2010/11

The Policy Development Scrutiny Committee typically looks at two to three topics per year in depth. The topics are selected by the committee at an early meeting from a shortlist of proposals from officers, cabinet, backbench members and through consultation with others inside and outside the council.

The committee met on ten occasions between June 2010 and March 2011. At its first meeting in June it considered a shortlist of review topics developed through the consultation process. The following topics were chosen in order of preference:

- (i) Services for the Deceased
- (ii) Affordable Housing
- (iii) Best Practice Town Centre Renewal

A review of parking policies was considered but deferred until later in the year, however, due to a lack of committee time, the review was not taken forward but placed on the provisional work programme for 2011/12.

The committee also concluded its 2009/10 review of the South West Herts. Transport Strategy by agreeing a final draft report and referring it to cabinet for consideration.

2.2 Services for the Deceased

This review was carried out by a task group appointed by the main committee. The group was led by Councillor Watkin who was ably assisted by Councillors Counter, Collett and Dhindsa.

The purpose of this review was to investigate the services for the deceased offered by the council. The review was centred on the council's two cemeteries and looked at the current provision of services and the future needs of the borough.

The Committee found that the cemeteries are a valuable asset to the borough and are acknowledged as being well-run and providing an excellent service. They are particularly important for certain faith, belief and community groups. There are however a number of changes to policies which could be made to better accommodate the needs of these different groups.

The service is not financially self-sufficient and the current fees structure should be reviewed to ensure more of the costs are covered, eventually leading to self-sufficiency. In considering how this service will be provided in the future, the council will need to be mindful of environmental concerns as well as the needs of faith groups and ensure accessibility for all residents. With capacity due to run out in 14 years the council will shortly need to start investigating new sites which will be able to accommodate the wider requirements identified in the report.

The report made 10 recommendations to cabinet, the outcomes and impact of the agreed recommendations will be reviewed during 2011/12.

2.3 Affordable Housing

The committee set out to establish the current position of supply and demand, to investigate the barriers to more affordable housing, to look at the current policies being pursued to see if there is scope to provide more affordable housing in the borough and to establish how affordable housing is provided and what improvements could be made.

The committee found that the provision of affordable housing is a growing problem with no easy solutions. The most significant barriers to more affordable housing in Watford are beyond the control of the council; in particular the shortage of land in the borough and the high house prices both regionally and nationally. However, the council does have powers as the local planning authority and it is the council which maintains the housing register.

Affordable housing is an area where consistent monitoring is required, particularly with the forthcoming changes to grants, benefits and planning regulations. Overall, the council operates a joined-up and robust approach to affordable housing and the council officers work well between departments and have good working relationships with outside bodies.

The report made six recommendations to cabinet, the outcomes and impact of the agreed recommendations will be reviewed by the committee during 2011/12.

2.4 Best Practice Town Centre Renewal

The committee set out to provide cabinet with a clear picture of what a successful development looks like based on a range of needs (updating infrastructure which is no longer fit for purpose) necessities (designing in safety for users) and ambitions (achieving a vision which is realistic).

In the event, following some initial research, the committee decided that it was not possible to define a manageable scope and agreed not to pursue the project.

2.5 Progress of the Committee's review work recommendations carried out in previous years.

The committee routinely manages progress of the agreed recommendations of its projects. The intention is to see that the policy in question is effective in achieving the outcomes intended from the work. In 2010/11 the committee received feedback from cabinet on its 2009/10 work and re-examined seven projects carried out between 2005 and 2008. The reports in question are listed in appendix A.

2.6 Process and procedural changes

The committee occasionally indulges in self scrutiny to ensure it is effective in what it does. This year members have closely examined the process of reviewing past reports and as a result have developed a revised procedure to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny through ongoing monitoring of the results of policy review work.

The purpose of policy review work is to assist the executive to improve services and service delivery. The outcome of a review, as defined at the start of each project, is

the key issue to be assessed – essentially, have the improvements intended been achieved?

The revised process was used during the latter half of the year and has proved to be successful in its aims. The process will be commended to the new Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

2.7 **Chair's commentary**

When the committee first started to look at the topics selected for the year, we soon realised that the scoping process was vital to producing relevant and timely outcomes.

At the start of the topic of Town Centre Renewal, it was evident that clear outcomes could not be determined without duplicating other work. The Night Time Economy had already been reviewed in 2007/8 and the town centre was changing with the Colosseum and the Charter Place redevelopments. After reviewing initial research, we agreed to halt this scrutiny subject.

This process helped with other work carried out this year. It has enabled us to review past scrutiny reports in a structured and constructive way and ensured our scoping processes have led to focused and achievable pieces of work.

The review of the Economic Development Strategy was an opportunity to feed into this vital policy before it went to cabinet. This also served to highlight the value of scrutiny in reviewing a key strategy document to cabinet and officers. The service which created the document had the full endorsement of the committee before it went to cabinet.

When we moved onto Affordable Housing, we met with Planning officers, Registered Social Landlords, Housing officers and consulted research documents on best practices and changes to national housing policy. The final report will feed into council policy and practices and will have an effect on Watford residents.

The Task Group on Services for the Deceased did a good piece of work on helping set council policy and for setting out potential opportunities in the future. It also helped show the benefits of having a tight time schedule and a focused agenda.

I would like to thank all the committee members, officers and members of outside bodies for their feedback, information, expertise and time.

Councillor Kelly McLeod
Chair of Policy Development Scrutiny Committee

3. Call-in & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Councillor Rackett (Chair)
Councillor Grimston (Vice-Chair)
Councillors I Brown, Dhindsa, Greenslade, Hastrick, Leslie, Martins and Poole,

3.1 The Committee's work programme for 2010/11

The Call-In & Performance Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during 2010/11. In 2008/9 the committee adopted a revised approach where in a new format it examined only one major and one minor topic per meeting. The committee continued with the same basic approach in 2010/11 but leaving space for issues which may crop up from time to time over the year. The review topics included in the programme were selected by the committee at its first meeting from a shortlist of topics nominated by members following consultation across the council and with external organisations with an interest in the council's activities.

One meeting this year was devoted to the examination of the work of external organisations; this was the performance of SLM, the council's leisure centre contractor. This is in recognition of the increasing importance of partnerships and the council's involvement with external organisations that provide public services. It is expected that the scrutiny of external organisations will increase in future years.

3.2 Work summary

3.2.1 Committee meetings

The committee examined in depth the performance of five areas of activity of the council and its partners:

- (i) Leisure Centres and the Performance of SLM
- (ii) Choice Based Lettings
- (iii) Alcohol Licensing
- (iv) Elections Processes
- (v) Economic Development

Conclusions to the committee's discussions have been drafted into short reports and passed to portfolio holders, or other appropriate people, for information and/or action. The reports make general comments about overall performance, contain some specific recommendations for action and call for ongoing monitoring of areas of concern.

3.2.2 Performance Management

The Committee has continued its work of reviewing quarterly performance reports (PIs) and commenting on the progress of projects and on performance measures/indicators although the regime has changed this year because of the government's decision to greatly reduce the number of national PIs. A number of areas were noted to be of concern because of under performance or inconsistent performance; these were followed up with services heads.

With regard to next year, underperforming areas will be recommended to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for ongoing monitoring. The Overview & Scrutiny

Committee may also care to review the content of reports and discuss with service heads the possibility of providing a comprehensive set of local PIs.

3.2.3 Task groups

The committee established three task groups during the year:

- (i) The Community Safety Partnership Task Group.
Councillors Martins (Chair) Grimston (Vice Chair) Khan, Lovejoy, McLeod and Mortimer.

The task group met on four occasions and scrutinised the following topics.

- The Community Safety Partnership's 2009/10 performance.
The task group concluded that the figures were generally heartening and moving in the right direction. Members selected the following areas for further attention –
The distorting effect that Central Ward had on the figures and the cost of policing this ward.
Housing ex-offenders.
Street drinkers and rough sleepers, is there adequate provision in the borough.
- Youth offending – an update on the Group's conclusions from its meeting in November 2009.
The task group concluded that, overall, the message is positive, youth offending numbers are small and reducing, and this is supported by figures. Issues to monitor next year are the problems of drug related offences and the increase in female offenders.
- Dangerous Dogs – current issues.
Some specific conclusions were –
Firmer council action is needed in response to dog on dog incidents, muzzling and leashing should be mandatory after a first offence.
Ability for council action beyond this is limited other than working with the local community and trying to educate the public about controlling their dogs. All of the legislation available is being used.
- Drug and alcohol abuse – an update on the group's conclusions from its meeting in January 2010.
The task group received replies from a range of agencies addressing problems highlighted at the January meeting. Members concluded that they were happy with the responses and the actions being taken.
- Crime statistics and related performance.
Members were concerned about their difficulty in interpreting the presented figures; the violent crime category for example covers a wide range of offences and can include statistics from GBH at one extreme to shouting abuse at the other. If the Police receive a complaint they are obliged to make a record, no matter how trivial, and this will be reported in the crime statistics.

Looking at quarterly figures posted on the website is not always useful and year on year figures can also be distorting. To be most informative current figures should be looked at in conjunction with trends over a number of years. It was agreed that the task group will invite an analyst from the Police to take them through the available information and construct sets of information to meet its needs. It was also agreed that the meeting will be open to all members of the council.

- Stop and search
The task group recommended that future crime statistic reports contain -
 - a breakdown of the ethnicity of people stopped and searched in Central ward
 - a breakdown of the ethnicity of people stopped and searched in all other wards
 - numbers of people stopped and searched from outside the borough
 - a breakdown of offences in Central ward
 - a breakdown of offences in all other wards
 - crime by type in Central
 - crime by type in all other wards

- Neighbourhood Watch.
Members noted that Neighbourhood Watch now has new parameters; the Police want to ensure that all participants are fully engaged in the new minimum standards. To ensure proper buy-in the approach is steady, the target is to generate one new scheme each quarter. Progress of the role out and impact of the new scheme is to be followed up by the task group.

- Relationships between the Police and minority communities.
The task group concluded that In Watford the Police generally have good relationships with minority groups and work to maintain them. Relationships with the Asian community are fair at present but do fluctuate. The position requires to be monitored.

- Policing the Town Centre
The Task Group concluded:
 - The approach of working towards a family-friendly image is to be commended.
 - The council has limited ability to increase licence fees but this may be changing. A review of charges is recommended if the opportunity arises.
 - Whilst part of the strategy to reduce crime and disorder the taxi marshals' activities give some cause for concern and need to be monitored.
 - Support for doormen is in need of more work.
 - Members of the 2011/12 Community Safety Task Group (or its successor) should make a night time visit to the town centre to observe the problems and solutions at first hand.
 - Unreported crime in the context of crime statistics is of concern to members. It is recommended that the 2011/12 Community Safety Task Group undertakes a review of this issue in conjunction with the review of statistics.

- (ii) To review the council's support for the voluntary sector
Councillors Johnson (Chair) Dhindsa, Greenslade and Rackett.

The task group concluded the following –

The term 'voluntary sector' is widely applied when describing the range of organisations that apply to the council for grant aid. Applicants include organisations that provide for –

- social needs (such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK),

- community groups (such as the Multi Cultural Community Centre)
- umbrella support (such as the Council for Voluntary Services)
- art and culture (such as the Palace Theatre).

The three 'pots' of grant aid available are designed to provide opportunities for all voluntary sector organisations to seek financial support from the council, regardless of their size or status. The process and procedure for making grant awards is well prescribed and easy to follow. The council provides a good level of information on the process and supports grant applicants in making their bids, as does the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS). However, it appears that some organisations bidding for three year funding have misunderstandings about their status and chances of success. This is an area where the council needs to be clearer. Further, the balance between new and established organisations may be an issue which needs reviewing; there should be more opportunities for new organisations and new projects.

The council should be clearer in the messages it gives to prospective bidders. In its willingness to make grants as available and open as possible the council attracts many organisations which will struggle to achieve any degree of success. The council should be more explicit about the type of organisation or project it wishes to support so as not to raise unrealisable expectations.

Grants budgets are likely to reduce in the foreseeable future. The council is currently working to reduce dependency but more could be done in developing strategies to achieve this.

The CVS should be encouraged and supported in its initiatives to assist voluntary sector organisations to improve their business planning and develop social enterprises.

Members made eight recommendations, six to cabinet and two to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Progress will be followed up in 2011/12.

- (iii) To review the Neighbourhood Forums and their performance since being introduced in 2008
Councillors Greenslade (Chair) J Brown, Johnson, McLeod, Meerabux and Watkin,

The task group found that –

- Neighbourhood Forums are engaging with residents and offer value for money but because of the nature of projects this is difficult to quantify.
- Wards in Watford are not homogenous and it is clear that when it comes to community engagement one size does not fit all. The flexible system that is in place allows members to engage with residents in the most appropriate way.
- There is a strong consensus that Neighbourhood Forums are a significant improvement on Area Committees as they allow for more flexibility.
- Areas for improvement include publicity and the protocol for working with officers. There is potential for future development by extending the partnership working undertaken by ward members.

The task group made eleven recommendations which are to be considered first be Constitution Working Party and then by council.

3.2.4 Call-in of decisions.

There were no decisions called-in during 2010/11.

3.3 Comment on process

The committee built on the revised process adopted in 2008/9 which was to reduce the number of items considered at each meeting to allow guests more time to present their subjects and for members to have a fuller discussion of issues. This year, members deferred discussion of conclusions to a following meeting thus taking time to reflect on their conclusions and for officers to summarise evidence in a written report. It is considered that this approach has, over the year, produced better conclusions and is to be recommended for future performance reviews.

3.4 Pre meetings

Instituted to provide time for members to agree issues and plan their approach and for some informal training. Pre meetings are considered to be useful by officers but didn't work well for members because of poor attendance. Overview & Scrutiny should consider using these next year but in the context of the new structure.

3.5 Chair's commentary

It has been a year of change for the committee and we have attempted to involve all members, at one time or other, in the preparation of scrutiny items. The full committee has also spent a little more time on individual themes and rather than agreeing the recommendations on the same night as hearing the evidence, had some time for consideration and further clarification. We hope that this has led to more rounded conclusions.

Amongst our activities has been a look at the elections process, the management of leisure centres, choice based lettings, local economic policy and licensing enforcement and we hope that our insight will lead to improvements in all these areas. In addition a task group looked at the voluntary sector.

A working and credible scrutiny process is vital to local democracy and is the way the executive can be held accountable. I would like to thank all those that gave evidence or contributed to our work. Not least I would like to thank the Council's outgoing Scrutiny Manager, Mike Thomas for his invaluable support throughout the year.

Councillor Steve Rackett
Chair of Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee