

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 JULY 2012

Present: Councillor K Collett (Chair)
Councillor A Khan (Vice-Chair)
Councillors N Bell, K Hastrick, M Hofman, R Martins and
S Rackett

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aron and Greenslade.

16 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2012 were submitted and signed.

18 MINUTES - BUDGET PANEL AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the minutes for Budget Panel, which had met on 12 June 2012. The minutes were available on the Council's website.

The Vice-Chair requested that the presentation on Business Rates Retention, given at the meeting in June, was circulated to the Scrutiny Committee.

Following a brief discussion it was agreed that the presentation would be circulated to all Councillors.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Business Rates Retention presentation be circulated to all Councillors.
2. that the minutes of the Budget Panel meeting held on 12 June 2012 be noted.

19 **CALL-IN**

No Executive decisions had been called in.

20 **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

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

Members considered the responses to each of the outstanding actions and questions.

PI 22 – Performance Indicators for 2012/13

The Chair reminded Members to review the list of performance indicators presented at the last meeting and to inform the Partnerships and Performance Section Head or the Committee and Scrutiny Officer of any indicators they wanted included in this year's quarterly reports.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members

WP 11 – Review on the long term impact to voluntary organisations whose funding had been cut

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would liaise with the Head of Community Services regarding the timing of this review.

Councillor Martins suggested that the impact on the four organisations could be brought to the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework Task Group in September. The information might help feed into the Task Group's current review.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

PSL 1 – Property Policy review

The Scrutiny Committee noted the Head of Legal and Property Services' response included within the update. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed Members that the officers from Property Services would be attending the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework Task Group's meeting in August to explain about property and the voluntary sector.

HP 6 – Review of Hospital Parking Charges Task Group's Recommendations

The Scrutiny Committee was disappointed that there had been a lack of response to the Task Group's recommendations. The Chair confirmed that, as the Chair of the original Task Group, she had not received a reply to the offer to

meet with the Hospital's representatives. Members considered there was a lack of accountability on the part of the hospital.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she would be writing to the Hospital to ask for feedback and if there were any progress on the Task Group's recommendations. This information would be reported to the September meeting.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

PR 1 – Services for the Deceased Task Group update

The Scrutiny Committee received an update from the Parks and Open Spaces Section Head. Members noted the latest update and agreed that some of the recommendations had been fulfilled. It was felt that other recommendations could be affected by the service being outsourced. It was agreed that the outstanding recommendations would be reviewed again in February once further information about the future plans for the service were known.

Following a discussion about the extension of hours at the cemeteries, the Chair asked that the Parks and Open Spaces Section Head's report on the costing and available options be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the new Scrutiny Panel. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would be writing to all those Members who had expressed an interest in taking part, as promised at the last meeting. It was agreed that Members might need different skills when reviewing contracts. Members felt that the Councillors taking part in the new Scrutiny Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive training. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer responded that officers would try to identify suitable training options. If the training were to be provided in-house it would be possible to open it up to all Councillors and not just those involved with the Scrutiny Panel and this Committee.

It was suggested that the Managing Director might be invited to the first meeting. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer stated that she intended to contact the Managing Director to ask for his views about the type of work the Scrutiny Panel might undertake.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel would plan its work. Councillor Khan referred to the role of the Three Rivers and Watford Shared Services Joint Committee. The Joint Committee had reviewed the specifications for the proposed ICT outsource contract. He felt the key role for scrutiny was to consider the expectations for outsourced services and the objectives.

RESOLVED –

1. that the outstanding actions and questions' update be noted and amended according to the Scrutiny Committee's comments.
2. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer contacts the Head of Community Services to request information about the impact on the four organisations who did not receive funding in 2012/13, which is to be provided to the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework Task Group.
3. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer writes to Watford General Hospital for an update on the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group's recommendations.

21 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out the changes to the Forward Plan since the previous meeting in June.

RESOLVED –

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

22 **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the latest update on the recommendations agreed at the Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee in February 2011.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed Members that originally the Scrutiny Committee had asked that the recommendations were forwarded to the Portfolio Holder and then to Cabinet. The recommendations were agreed just before the new scrutiny structures were introduced and unfortunately had been overlooked. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer apologised for this oversight. She advised Members that the Housing Section Head had reviewed the recommendations and previous comments and provided an update. She asked Members to be mindful of the recent restructure of the service as this may have had an impact on the team being able to take on board the recommendations.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that they could consider the responses and decide whether they wanted the report to be forwarded to Cabinet or confirm they were satisfied with the update.

Councillor Rackett, the Chair of the Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee in February 2012, suggested that the Scrutiny Committee's original report, including the recommendations and the latest update should be presented to Cabinet. He was not satisfied with some of the responses, particularly 7, the inclusion of Council Tax information on property listings.

Councillor Bell commented that many aspects had been discussed at the Housing Policy Advisory Group.

RESOLVED –

that the Choice Based Lettings report and recommendations, produced by Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee, be forwarded to Cabinet as originally requested.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

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PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE - NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS TASK GROUP

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the latest update on the recommendations agreed by Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee in March 2011. The final report had been forwarded to Constitution Working Party. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the report was then due to be forwarded to Council, but unfortunately this had not happened. The decision had been agreed just as the Council's scrutiny arrangements were changing and unfortunately it had been overlooked. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that they could review the recommendations and consider whether they were satisfied with the outcomes or whether the report should be forwarded to Council.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the update. A press release was discussed which would advise residents that funding was available. It was noted that the County Council suggested that County Councillors set a deadline for applications to ensure they were processed within the financial year.

Councillor Rackett suggested that the application form Members completed could include a question asking the Ward Councillors how they reached their decision to fund a certain organisation and not fund others.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the section on the Council's website about Neighbourhood Forums. She advised that it was maintained by the Democratic Services Team and it included the Annual Reports and details of meetings when known. She suggested that if Members had any other ideas they could raise them with the team, who would then look into the feasibility of including it on the relevant web pages.

It was noted that recommendation 8 referred to having updates in About Watford. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer said that she would contact the Communications Manager to discuss the best editions to include an article. She would then circulate this information to all Councillors including the necessary deadlines. She suggested that Democratic Services could collect the individual articles and forward them to the Communications Team.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed good practice and the cost of holding meetings in different wards, particularly the delivery of the notice of meeting. It was acknowledged that wards were very different and it was appreciated that there was flexibility in the scheme.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that recommendation 9 suggested the use of the Members' Bulletin to highlight good practice. If Members felt that they had information they wanted to share about good practice or things to avoid, they could ask for an article to be included in the bulletin, which was circulated to all Members each month.

RESOLVED –

that the latest update on the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group's recommendations be noted and the review is considered to be complete.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

24 TASK GROUP UPDATE

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that there was nothing to report on Task Groups since the last meeting.

25 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Wednesday 19 September 2012
- Wednesday 3 October 2012 (call-in only)
- Thursday 18 October 2012 (call-in only)

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.10 pm