

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 NOVEMBER 2012

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

Also present: Councillor Malcolm Meerabux
Councillor Mark Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and
Shared Services)
Eric Fehily (West Herts Hospitals NHS Trust)

Officers: Director of Corporate Resources and Governance
Head of Revenues and Benefits (Shared Services)
Partnerships and Performance Section Head
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

There were no apologies for absence.

36 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

37 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2012 were submitted and signed.

38 SCRUTINY PANELS/TASK GROUPS

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the minutes of the following Scrutiny Panels and Task Groups which had been published since Overview and Scrutiny Committee's last meeting –

- Budget Panel 11 September and 23 October 2012
- Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel 18 September 2012
- Community Safety Partnership Task Group 10 October 2012

RESOLVED –

that the minutes of the various Scrutiny Panels and Task Group be noted.

PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP

The Chair introduced Eric Fehily, the Associate Director of Infrastructure for West Herts Hospital NHS Trust. She invited him to respond to the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group's recommendations.

Mr Fehily explained his role at the Trust and that he was responsible for services at the three hospitals within the Trust. He confirmed that he would be speaking to the Scrutiny Committee about the Watford site when responding to the Task Group's recommendations. He informed Members that the funds had been confirmed for the new access road to the hospital and that a preferred bidder for the development had been agreed.

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

Mr Fehily informed the Scrutiny Committee that prior to his attendance at the Task Group he had received complaints from visitors about the information available on concessions. Since that meeting work had been carried out with the Patient and Liaison Services (PALS) to improve the information on the Trust's website. Details were included on noticeboards in the hospital's wards. Staff were aware of the procedures. Since his attendance at the Task Group he had not received any complaints.

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

Mr Fehily said that there were significant difficulties with this recommendation. The car park was managed by a contractor on behalf of the Trust and the parking charges had been agreed. The contract had a further 18 months to run and it was not possible to change the pricing structure. If the Trust had introduced this lower charge it could not afford to run the car park and NHS funds would have had to have been used.

Recommendation 3 – Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increase in parking charges

Mr Fehily informed the Scrutiny Committee that this was an agreed procedure by the Trust. He added that there were no current plans to increase charges.

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

Mr Fehily stated that the actual cost to administer a voucher scheme would be too costly. He explained that the Trust took a 'softly softly' approach and that penalty notices were mainly issued to staff for incorrect parking.

Recommendation 5 – Pay on exit scheme to be introduced

Mr Fehily explained that as part of Watford Health Campus a new multi storey car park would be built. This would increase the number of spaces for all users. The recommendation would be introduced with the new car park. At the present time it would be too costly to introduce as it would require the installation of four gates and barriers and the required equipment.

Recommendation 6 – Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays to be improved

Mr Fehily confirmed that the signage was in place; however, the spaces were currently available to all users. The reason for this was that due to the increase in activity at the site the car park was regularly full. The signage was being ignored as the spaces were needed in order to be able to run the hospital.

Recommendation 7 – Signage and information on parking areas for visitors to be improved

Mr Fehily advised that the signage had been improved throughout the site. The signage was constantly under review. There were proposals for a new surgery ward to be built on the car park and therefore signage would be reviewed.

Recommendation 8 – Signs informing on slippery roads to be installed

Mr Fehily said that instead of 'slippery' the signage would state 'car park on slope – caution'. This needed to be completed.

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

Mr Fehily informed the Scrutiny Committee that there were car park attendants located in the car park in the morning in order to direct people to the correct entrance. The Acute Admissions Unit had a different entrance to the main hospital. The Renal Unit was located in a different building. The car park attendants were proactive.

In conclusion Mr Fehily stated that the most difficult recommendation was regarding the £2.50 charge. The Trust had a contractual relationship until 2015 and it would be costly to break that contract.

The Chair asked whether, at a later date, the Trust would consider a charging scheme based on the amount of time spent in the car park.

Mr Fehily responded that a business case for the car park had been prepared and would be presented to the Business Case Review Group. If the Review Group agreed to the proposals they would then be presented to the Trust's Board for approval. All parking options for the multi-storey car park would be considered. He added that £150,000 had been invested in the car park, including road repairs, lines, new disabled bays and access.

Councillor Bell questioned whether penalty notices were only issued to staff as he had received complaints from other users. He also asked whether the new multi-storey car park would be large enough to replace the existing car parks.

Mr Fehily advised that if a visitor had parked illegally then they would receive a penalty notice. However, they were mainly issued to staff. He said that the car park was managed as sensitively as possible. The majority of penalty notices were quashed.

With regard to the new multi-storey car park, he explained that consultants had been employed to review the parking arrangements. The consultants felt that the number of spaces needed to be increased to 1,600. It was acknowledged that the Trust needed to work on its Green Travel Plan. Once the new road had been built people would be encouraged to use bicycles. The first 10 minutes and the last 10 minutes of a person's experience at a hospital were important and this was not good if they had problems parking.

Mr Fehily added that car parking providers would be asked for their views on parking arrangements through market testing. The most suitable option for the hospital would be implemented. Stakeholders would be involved in the development.

Councillor Greenslade commented that there had been discussions since the 1980's about a multi-storey car park for the hospital. She asked for assurances that it would definitely be built this time.

Mr Fehily responded that the business case had been written. It would be delivered in partnership with Kier and the development partners. Following a question from Councillor Greenslade about height restrictions, he assured her that all aspects including the height of vehicles would be taken on board.

Councillor Khan referred to a recent visit to the hospital. It had taken him some time to find a space. He asked how long the Associate Director thought the current situation would continue and whether there was anything the Council could do to assist the hospital.

Mr Fehily explained that the current problems were due to the building works. The staff used a car park in Cardiff Road which had been leased from the Council. More space was needed. Activity levels went up in line with the complexity of cases seen at the hospital. More people requested outpatient appointments at Watford. The Trust's website advised people to leave plenty of time to find a parking place. The building works should be completed by Christmas and the parking situation should improve in January. The multi-storey car park would take approximately 12 months to build. Planning approval was likely to be sought in the summer; therefore it would take approximately 18 months to complete it.

Following a further question, Mr Fehily added that once the Trust's Board signed off the business case, the Health Authority would be asked to approve the

scheme. Once approved, the Trust could go to the market and select a preferred bidder.

Councillor Martins said that he was disappointed that the recommendation of a £2.50 charge had not been implemented. He asked whether the business case ruled out the £2.50 charge. He commented that he understood the reason for issuing penalty notices for illegal parking and asked about penalty notices for those people who overstayed the time on their ticket.

Mr Fehily advised that he did not have details of the business case available. He assured Members that the parking contractor's role was not to penalise patients and visitors. If people did have an issue they could go to the PALS office. He explained that each complaint would be considered on its own merits. He reiterated that the hospital took a 'softly softly' approach.

Councillor Martins asked for details of the number of penalty notices issued and the number of appeals.

Councillor Hofman asked whether the business plan had taken account of the Croxley Rail Link when assessing the number of spaces required.

Mr Fehily confirmed that the forecast had been based on the future activities at the hospital. It assumed that a number of people would use the train and a number of people would cycle to the site.

Councillor Hofman noted that the overflow car park was not used at the weekends. He suggested that the Trust could open it and charge a fee to those going to the football ground.

Mr Fehily explained that it was not used due to a planning condition imposed by the Council. He said that ideally the Cardiff Road car park would be open for staff thereby freeing spaces in the main car park for visitors.

Councillor Meerabux commented that the charge of £4.00 was too high. He was aware that people passed their unexpired tickets on to other car park users.

The Chair responded that this matter had come out in the review. At the Task Group meeting Mr Fehily had stated that he would take the comments back to the Trust.

Mr Fehily added that the Trust was aware the exchange of tickets occurred but turned a 'blind eye'. The multi-storey car park would have an automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system and this would mean that people would not be able to transfer tickets. ANPR was a mechanism used to manage car parks.

The Chair thanked Mr Fehily for attending the meeting and updating Members on the Trust's plans for the hospital car park.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer would contact the Associate Director in six months to check on the progress of the plans for the car park which would then be circulated to Members.

RESOLVED –

that a further update on the car park be provided to the Scrutiny Committee in six months.

40 **CALL-IN**

No Executive decisions had been called in.

41 **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.

PR 5 Neighbourhood Forums – articles in About Watford

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she had had further discussions with the Communications Team regarding articles in About Watford relating to Neighbourhood Forums. She advised Members that the Communications Team would shortly be contacting all Councillors with details of the publication deadline for the next edition of the Council magazine. Members would be able to have articles highlighting projects in their wards, including pictures, and publicise any forthcoming Neighbourhood Forum meetings.

RESOLVED –

that the outstanding actions and questions' update be noted.

42 **QUARTER 2 2012/13 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head setting out the Key Performance Indicators and the second quarter performance measures for 2012/13. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head highlighted some of the key aspects of the report. She reminded Members that benchmarking information could be provided if required.

In response to a question from the previous meeting, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head confirmed that Environmental Services took the

service lead for all complaints received by the Council. It was no longer covered by Corporate Services as this service no longer existed within the Council. The figures in the report were therefore for the whole of the Council.

ES9 (percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arising which have been recycled)

Following a question from Councillor Bell, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she understood that due to the poor weather it was difficult to keep the garden waste down. This was likely to have an impact through the year.

Councillor Khan noted the high level of wastage. He asked whether the Council had considered a weekly collection.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Council needed to collect 40% of recyclables in order to receive recycling credits and it was currently on target.

Councillor Rackett said that it was important that the Council considered the feasibility of a weekly collection and what this would do to the recycling rates and the cost of providing the service. He was aware that in many terraced areas the recycling boxes were full after one week and residents then put their recycling into the household waste instead.

CS13 (KPI6) (number of households living in temporary accommodation)

Councillor Bell noted the target and actual data for this measure. He asked whether officers expected this figure to rise due to the impact caused by changes to housing benefits.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that officers were working with the private sector to find accommodation. The Housing Team's structure had changed during the year. One team concentrated on the supply of accommodation. This included properties with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector.

Councillor Bell said that he was aware of the budget of £150,000 to pay for bed and breakfast accommodation. He asked whether it was likely that more resources could be required.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she would contact the service for future projections.

HR1 (KPI8) (sickness absence – working days lost)

Following a question from Councillor Khan regarding sickness absence, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the statistics in the report did not separate the short term sickness and the long term sickness. The Council had implemented new management procedures for short term sickness.

For example a letter was sent to the employee by their manager on the second day of absence. For those on long term sickness there were other procedures in place including occupational health advice. The overall figure could be broken down further.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed Members that recently a monthly bulletin had been started setting out details of sickness across the Council. It was available on the Intranet and she would forward the information to the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Meerabux asked whether the sickness level was linked to the possibility of outsourcing services and the risk of redundancy. For example the officers might be feeling under pressure.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head responded that any organisation going through a period of change had an impact on its staff. Stress was included in the detailed statistics. It was possible to compare data over a period of years.

Cor2 (complaints resolved at stage one)

Councillor Martins noted the low level of complaints resolved compared to the target of 90%.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head confirmed that this measure was below target. Response to complaints had to be fitted into the day to day work of services and this was sometimes difficult to achieve. The analysis of complaints included those that had been upheld and those that had not been upheld.

CS12 (KPI5) (number of affordable homes delivered)

Councillor Aron referred to actual number of affordable homes delivered in the second quarter compared to the target. She asked whether the 49 properties were on the Cassio Campus site. She also enquired if this would have an impact on the waiting list.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that sometimes targets were based on previous years. It was possible that the service had been too optimistic when setting the target but this could be difficult with an area like the delivery of housing. With regard to the impact on those waiting for a property, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the service had commented that it was fortunate that a number of premises had become available. There could be an impact at a later date if the supply of new homes coming through were to fall.

The Chair referred to the appendix and the various abbreviations used throughout the document. She asked that in future reports the abbreviations were explained.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Scrutiny Committee's comments on the performance of the council's key performance indicators for 2012/13 at the end of quarter 2 be noted.
2. that the Scrutiny Committee's comments on the additional performance measures at the end of quarter 2 be noted.

43

BENEFITS DEPARTMENT UPDATE

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits which provided an explanation of the improvement in Performance Indicators for the Benefits service and the background to the statistics.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained the procedures that had been implemented to meet the service's increasing workload. He assured Members that when people were asked for additional information it did not affect the start date of their claim. The claim began from the first date they approached the service.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Shared Services Joint Committee had agreed that external sources could be used to help reduce the backlog of claims. A review was carried out of the external provider's quality of work. In some cases the service made a complaint and some of the external provider's agents were removed from the work. The Council also monitored the workload of its own staff.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits referred Members to paragraph 3.2 of the report and the performance data for each month from April. He advised the Scrutiny Committee that if claimants informed the Council of a change in their circumstances they were allowed one month to provide all the relevant information required. This delay added to the average time taken to process the changes and was reflected in the performance indicator.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed the Scrutiny Committee that officers were aware of the request to report on the number of cases outstanding rather than the number of documents. The software had been amended and in the future officers would be able to provide information based on the number of cases.

Councillor Bell acknowledged the improved performance indicators and that help had been provided by two external companies. Additional funding had been granted to carry out this work. He said that external companies did not have face to face contact with the public whereas the Council staff did. He said that he felt this was more stressful for the internal staff and asked whether this was taken into account when monitoring their work. In addition he enquired how the forthcoming benefit changes would affect Watford.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits advised Members that he was aware of the face to face and telephone contact the internal staff had with the public and this was taken into account when monitoring them.

In response to the second part of Councillor Bell's questions, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the changes would begin to be introduced in April 2013. The first change related to a reduction in housing benefit for social housing tenants if their property was deemed to be too large for their needs. Tenants would still be able to claim housing benefit but might not receive the same amount. There was potential for people to be at risk of not paying their full rent. Discussions were taking place with the Housing Team. Officers were working with the Watford Community Housing Trust to try and identify potential clients who may experience problems in the future.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that Universal Credit would begin to be introduced from October 2013, however he was not aware of the exact date it would affect Watford. It was likely to be phased in from October 2013, which could mean a reduction in caseload from November or December 2013. However, it was not envisaged that initially there would be a large reduction in caseload. He confirmed that officers from different departments were looking at help for vulnerable tenants.

Councillor Aron noted that the officer had stated that many claimants did not provide all the information on making their application. She asked whether they were provided with details setting out the documents required.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the application form included a checklist of the types of documents that would be required. When claimants came to the Customer Service Centre an officer would go through the form and provide the applicant with a checklist of required documents. When that information was provided the application was then fast tracked.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits added that applications were received from various sources and not only direct from the client. For example, applications could be made at Job Centre Plus. Job Centre Plus would require some information but the Council would require information about the client's application to Job Centre Plus. Officers suggested that applications were submitted as soon as possible rather than waiting for all the information to be available, as this would affect the date of the application. Some applicants brought all their information when making the claim whereas other cases might take longer than 28 days.

Following a question from the Chair, the Head of Revenues and Benefits stated that Job Centre Plus had similar procedures to the Council, the difference being that they would look at applications for Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support. The Council would need to wait for the result of the application to Job Centre Plus before being able to process applications for Housing Benefit.

Councillor Rackett asked for details of the increase in budget for the service and whether the work carried out by the Customer Service Centre was included.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed Members that the financial details were presented to the Shared Services Joint Committee in September 2012.

Councillor Khan commented that he was pleased the figures were going down. He said that he had been very critical of the service at the Shared Services Joint Committee. The changes to the benefits system meant that there was a degree of uncertainty. He felt it was a valid point that some families would be stretched.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits responded that the service was placed to meet the changes and the reduction in caseload. The service currently had a backlog of applications but steps had been put in place to reduce this. By April the service should be able to meet the forthcoming changes. The changes included the Council Tax Support Scheme which would be a different scheme to administer. People would have less income and would be making decisions on what they would pay. The service needed to review its enforcement practices and strike a balance between those who paid on time and those who needed assistance. In addition the service would need to identify those who were unable to pay and those people who chose not to pay. It would be necessary to look at debts holistically. People would be encouraged to pay and not penalised.

The Director for Corporate Resources and Governance informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Shared Services Joint Committee had asked officers to look at a soft market test for the service. He added that nationally there had been a 20% increase in Housing Benefit cases, however in Watford the increase had been 29%. In respect of Council Tax Benefit, nationally the increase had been 15% and in Watford it had been 19%. Until the impact of the Universal Credit it was not prudent to employ staff and then have to make cuts at a later date. This had been the reason the authorities had looked at other sources to provide support through the current period.

Councillor Meerabux asked about the length of the application form and the difficulties some people might experience in understanding it, particularly due to language.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits responded that the form was normally between 24 and 28 pages, but not all questions were relevant to all applicants. The form covered all eventualities. The e-claim form was intelligent and bypassed the questions which were inappropriate to the claimant. The service had visiting officers who went out to vulnerable people in their own homes, including those who had difficulty with reading. The officers were busy every day. When the officers returned to the office they then processed the claims.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head added that the Council used the services of a company called Languageline. Both Housing and the Benefits teams used this service.

The Portfolio Holder said that he wished to acknowledge the work the Head of Revenues and Benefits and Director for Corporate Resources and Governance had done. He had seen improvements over the last six months. When there

were fewer claims outstanding there were less people chasing their claim and contacting the office.

The Chair thanked the Director for Corporate Resources and Governance and Head of Revenues and Benefits for the information and responding to Members' questions.

RESOLVED –

1. that the report be noted.
2. that a further update be provided in six months time on progress.

44

SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out details of a review of the scrutiny structures introduced in May 2011.

Executive Decision Progress Report

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and how it affected scrutiny. She explained that the Forward Plan was no longer required and instead the Council had to give 28 days notice of any executive decision. The notices were included in one document, which was similar to the Forward Plan.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that prior to the new regulations she had been working with the Democratic Services Manager on a new way of reporting relevant information about the Forward Plan to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Following the introduction of the new regulations the new reporting mechanism had been developed further and was attached to the report as Appendix 1. The new document would be built up over a year from May and would form a comprehensive list of decisions which had been proposed and completed or withdrawn. Explanations would be provided as necessary. The document would also highlight where the item had not met the 28 days deadline and that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been informed. It would also report on items where the Chair had been asked to agree whether a decision could be classed as urgent and then exempt from call-in. Officers were required to provide a reason an item was urgent which would then be explained to the Chair.

As part of the new Regulations, if the Scrutiny Committee believed a non-key decision should have been classed as a key decision it could ask for a report to be submitted to Council. The document would also make it clear whether an item was key or non-key.

Councillor Khan advised that when Members received notification that a new plan had been published, it only referred to the Intranet and not the Internet.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer asked if the Councillor could forward the email to her and she would investigate the matter and amend it as necessary. She assured Members that the notice was published on the Council's website.

The Chair said that she felt the document was much clearer and Councillor Bell said that he was pleased with how it was set up.

Revised Scrutiny Proposal Form

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that the revised Scrutiny Proposal form would become a complete record of a review. She explained that additional information had been included to assist people when putting forward suggestions. It would also record Overview and Scrutiny Committee's decision and the agreed membership.

General comments

Councillor Rackett stated that scrutiny was the main way other Members could hold the Executive to account. Under the previous structure there had been two main scrutiny committees and various Task Groups. He said that he was frustrated with the way scrutiny was moving. In his view the system was not working. He was concerned that things would be missed.

Councillor Martins asked the Councillor for an example where there was a deficit in scrutiny.

Councillor Rackett said that he had noted that there was a scrutiny suggestion on the agenda but there were likely to be other suggestions. Officers had said that only one Task Group could be carried out at one time.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that a number of local authorities were reviewing their scrutiny arrangements. She had recently responded to an enquiry from Stevenage Borough Council about the scrutiny structure at Watford. She agreed that officers had stated that only one time limited Task Group could be set up since the introduction of the new Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel. Officers had, however, agreed to monitor the team's workload and if there were capacity for additional Task Groups they could be set up. She reminded Members that she was only able to present scrutiny suggestions to Overview and Scrutiny Committee when suggestions had been proposed.

Councillor Aron said that she was pleased that officers had attended the meeting and updated officers on the progress of the Housing Benefits Team. She asked that when Task Groups were established they should be party to all information. It was frustrating when Members were not provided with information as they could not make a decision. Councillor Hastrick agreed with these comments.

Councillor Bell said that he agreed with Councillor Rackett. The agenda for this meeting had been very heavy. He understood the officer's comments, but previously there had been an officer working solely on scrutiny.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Executive Decision Progress Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and included as a regular report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. that the revised Scrutiny Proposal Form, attached as Appendix 2 to the report, be approved and used with immediate effect.
3. that the report be noted.

45 **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including an update on the second recommendation of the Affordable Housing Review. The recommendation had last been reviewed in July 2011.

RESOLVED –

that the latest update be noted and that it be further reviewed in October 2014.

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

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer which provided an update on Cabinet's response to the recommendations originally agreed by Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee in February 2011.

Cabinet's response and its minutes were attached to the report.

RESOLVED –

that the latest update be noted.

47 **VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMISSIONING
FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including Cabinet's minutes from the meeting on 8 October 2012.

Councillor Aron informed Members that, as Chair of the Task Group, she would be working with the Portfolio Holder and Head of Community Services on the criteria for the small grants fund. She agreed to report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcome.

It was agreed that an update report would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in June 2013.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Cabinet's decision be noted.
2. that an update be provided in June 2013.

48

TASK GROUP SUGGESTIONS

The Scrutiny Committee received a scrutiny suggestion from Councillor Martins to review the management of disabled parking bays and parking by Blue Badge holders.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she had received a response from the Head of Planning, a copy of which was circulated to the Members.

Councillor Martins explained why he had put forward the suggestion. He felt that the Head of Planning assumed that there was not a problem that needed to be resolved. He said that he was aware of problems related to local residents' disabled bays.

Councillor Rackett said that he supported this suggestion. He would also like to suggest that a Task Group could be set up to look at the Property Review. Previously Members had been told not to commission a Task Group. He had been told that the review was under way. He felt that there was some work for scrutiny to do. Councillor Bell agreed that this review needed to be carried out.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that a scrutiny proposal form had never been completed for the Property Review. She added that Budget Panel would be receiving a presentation on the subject of Property at its meeting in February.

Councillor Rackett returned to Councillor Martins' suggestion and the Head of Planning's response. He felt the Head of Service was stating that there was no evidence of any problems. He received complaints from residents. It had also been commented on how long it took to get bays removed when they were no longer required. He agreed that this was a topic to be done.

Councillors Hastrick and Khan agreed that Councillor Martins' concern was valid.

Councillor Khan said that he would also like to propose a topic for review on the Housing Trust. He commented that between 40% and 50% of his casework related to the Housing Trust.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer stated that she would forward the new scrutiny proposal form to Members for completion.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that only one non-executive Member had responded to her email asking for volunteers for the Task Group should it be agreed. Councillor Brandon had expressed an interest in taking part in the review.

Councillors Bell, Collett, Martins and Greenslade said that they were interested in taking part in the Task Group to look at disabled parking bays.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would transfer the proposal on to the new template and circulate it to all those interested in taking part. The first meeting would be arranged as soon as possible.

RESOLVED –

1. that a Task Group be established to review the management of disabled bays and parking by Blue Badge holders.
2. that Councillors Bell, Brandon, Collett, Greenslade and Martins be appointed to the Task Group.
3. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer circulates the Scrutiny Proposal form to those Councillors interested in putting forward topics for future review.

49

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Thursday 20 December 2012 (For call-in only)
- Tuesday 15 January 2013 (For call-in only)
- Wednesday 23 January 2013

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 9.25 pm