

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 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 Mark Watkin (Portfolio Holder (present for minute
numbers 1-6 and 11))
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux

Officers: Partnerships and Performance Section Head
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

There were no apologies for absence.

2 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2012 were submitted and signed.

4 **MINUTES - BUDGET PANEL AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the minutes for the Community Safety Partnership Task Group, which had met on 6 March 2012. The minutes were available on the Council's website.

RESOLVED –

that the minutes of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group held on 6 March 2012 be noted.

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 1 – Services for the Deceased Task Group update

Councillor Watkin, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2011/12, advised the Scrutiny Committee that he had not received a response to his further enquiry. He stated that he would contact the relevant officer. He added that a complete review of the Parks service was currently taking place and it was likely that the Cemetery service was included as part of that review.

ACTION: Councillor Watkin and Committee and Scrutiny Officer

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

Councillor Martins requested an update on this action.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she was liaising with the Head of Community Services regarding the timing of this review. It was important to ensure that the groups were given sufficient time to enable them to make alternative arrangements. She added that the review was likely to take place following the completion of the Commissioning Framework Task Group.

Councillor Watkin advised that, as a Trustee for the Multi Cultural Community Centre, he was able to inform members that the organisation had been awarded £20,000. This would enable the organisation to develop its business plan for the future.

OA 6 – Benefits update

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the date set as the deadline for the review of the Benefits service was the date of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September. She would be contacting the Head of Revenues and Benefits to ensure he was aware of this deadline.

PSL 1 – Property Policy review

Councillor Bell asked for an update on the Property review.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that the Commissioning Framework, currently being developed, would take into account property in relation to the voluntary and community sector. She would contact the Head of Legal and Property Services for a further update.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

RESOLVED –

1. that the outstanding actions and questions' update be noted.
2. that Councillor Watkin contacts the Parks and Open Spaces Section Head for a further update on the Services for the Deceased Task Group's recommendations.
3. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer contacts the Head of Legal and Property Services for an update on the Property review.

6 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURES - END OF YEAR (QUARTER 4) 2011/12**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head including the performance of the eight key performance indicators (KPI) at the end of year 2011/12 (quarter 4 – March 2012) and those measures identified by Members for scrutiny during 2011/12.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head highlighted some of the indicators in the report, including benefits' statistics, litter, housing and Human Resources. She added that Members were asked to review the list of indicators to consider which ones they would require reported during 2012/13. She stated that if Members wanted further information about how certain indicators were collected then this could be arranged. It was also possible to compare the results with benchmark data, although this could be difficult as local authorities were not obliged to collect the information through a national performance framework.

KPI 8 (Average working days lost to sickness)

Following a question from Councillor Bell, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that there was much more information available below this overall figure. The main cause of sickness related to muscular skeletal problems and stress was the second most common reason. Environmental Services had the highest level of sickness.

KPI 6 (Households in temporary accommodation)

Councillor Bell said that he was concerned about the additional £150,000 required to cover the cost of placing people into bed and breakfast accommodation. He asked whether it was likely that more funding would be required.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head responded that she would need to contact the service for this information. She reminded Members that the Council had a statutory duty towards homeless people.

ACTION: Partnerships and Performance Section Head

Performance Indicators for 2012/13

The Scrutiny Committee was advised to review the list attached as Appendix C to the report and to contact the Partnerships and Performance Section Head or Committee and Scrutiny Officer with any suggestions.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the new Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel would take on the role of monitoring the performance indicators for the Leisure Centres as they were an outsourced service.

RESOLVED –

1. that Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments on the Council's key performance indicators for 2011/12 at the end of year be noted.
2. that Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments on the performance of the additional performance measures identified for the Committee's consideration at the end of year 2011/12 be noted.
3. that Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the list of local performance indicators and forwards any suggestions to the Partnerships and Performance Section Head or Committee and Scrutiny Officer.

7

OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out the background which led to the requirement to establish the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the appropriate number for the Scrutiny Panel. It was agreed that the Panel should not be too large and that 5 members would be the appropriate number.

Councillor Bell advised that Councillor Connal's name could be removed from the list of prospective Members.

Councillor Rackett apologised that a representative from his party had not come forward when asked. He advised that he had not realised that the Panel would have to be politically balanced. He said that he would like his name put forward as a potential member.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that, as the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to a membership of 5 Councillors, the Scrutiny Panel would need to

comprise three from the Liberal Democrat group, one from the Labour group and one from one of the other opposition groups. The list of proposed members comprised the appropriate number of Liberal Democrat and Labour Councillors, Councillors Shirena Counter, George Derbyshire, Sue Greenslade and Anne Joynes. There were, however, two nominations for the one seat for one of the other opposition groups.

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to vote on the final place. The nominations were Councillors Malcolm Meerabux, Conservative, and Steve Rackett, Green.

On being put to the vote Councillor Steve Rackett was appointed to the final place on the Outsourced Services Panel.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she would write to all Councillors who had expressed an interest and advise them of the outcome. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer outlined the arrangements for the first meeting.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Panel's proposed terms of reference.

Councillor Khan asked whether this Task Group would be able to review parking arrangements in the town and the impact of times, fees and charges.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that this subject was being reviewed by Budget Panel due to the financial aspects.

Councillor Rackett confirmed this and added that officers had been asked to prepare analysis for November. Budget Panel would be reviewing pricing structures.

Following a further question from Councillor Khan, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that any services which were outsourced in the future would be monitored by the new Scrutiny Panel. It was unlikely that the Panel would be involved prior to contracts being awarded but she said that she would clarify this with the Managing Director.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

RESOLVED –

1. that the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel comprises 5 Members.

2. that the Outsourced Services Panel for 2012/13 comprises the following Councillors –

Councillor Shirena Counter
Councillor George Derbyshire
Councillor Sue Greenslade
Councillor Anne Joynes
Councillor Steve Rackett

3. that the terms of reference shown as Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

8 **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 March. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that when the Forward Plan was published the Democratic Services Manager informed all Councillors of the publication.

RESOLVED –

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

9 **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the latest update on recommendations 3 and 4 of the Scrutiny Committee's review.

Members noted the responses and the establishment of the Housing Policy Advisory Group. The Housing Policy Advisory Group was welcomed as it enabled Members to have an input in to this important issue for Watford's residents.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the recommendations would be further monitored once the Advisory Group had redrafted the Nomination Policy. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer added that she would liaise with officers to ensure that the update was carried out at the appropriate time.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

RESOLVED –

that the recommendations be further reviewed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting in November.

10

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the list of names of the non-executive members who had expressed an interest in taking part in the Community Safety Partnership Task Group during 2012/13.

Councillor Martins asked that his name was included in the list of interested Members.

RESOLVED –

that the following Councillors be appointed to the Community Safety Partnership Task Group –

Councillor Jeanette Aron
Councillor Anne Joynes
Councillor Asif Khan
Councillor Ann Lovejoy
Councillor Rabi Martins
Councillor Kelly McLeod
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux

11

THE WAY AHEAD FOR COUNCIL SERVICES TASK GROUP

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the minutes of the Task Group's meeting on 9 February 2012 and Cabinet's response to the Task Group's recommendations.

Minutes – 9 February

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer's original draft of the minutes were circulated at the Scrutiny Committee's request and that no changes had been suggested. The final minutes were attached for approval.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the minutes were acceptable and it was agreed that Councillor Watkin, the Chair of the Task Group, and Councillor Rackett, the Vice-Chair should both sign the minutes.

Task Group's recommendations and Cabinet's response

Cabinet's response to the recommendations was noted. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel had been introduced as a result of the Task Group's recommendation.

RESOLVED –

1. that the minutes of the Task Group meeting held on 9 February 2012 be agreed and signed.
2. that Cabinet's comments be noted.

12

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out details of the progress of the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework Task Group.

Following a question from Councillor Meerabux, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that when agreeing the membership of this task group it had been necessary to take account of Members' Registers of Interests. Due to the nature of the work it was important that any recommendations or decision could not be called into dispute. She reminded Members that at all times it was important to be mindful of the Code of Conduct. It was necessary to consider the public perception of whether there might be any bias on the part of the decision maker.

Members agreed that it was important to be mindful of the public perception particularly where there were financial implications.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer stated that the approval for the membership for the Task Group had been delegated to the Head of Legal and Property Services in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Head of Legal and Property Services was the Monitoring Officer and therefore very aware of the need to consider Members' interests and the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer added that two Councillors had in fact resigned their membership of an organisation prior to the Task Group starting. One Councillor was a member of the Task Group and the other member attended as an observer.

Councillor Aron, who chaired the Task Group, suggested that when officers circulated the document for consultation it could be sent to all Councillors for their contribution. This would enable all Members to have an input into the new Commissioning Framework.

RESOLVED –

1. that the latest update of the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework Task Group be noted.

2. that the Head of Community Services be asked to circulate the draft Commissioning Framework to all Councillors as part of the consultation process.

13

WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the rolling work programme effective from June 2012. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that the work programme did not include the standard agenda items, for example 'Forward Plan', minutes from previous meetings including Task Groups and Panels or the work programme.

Councillor Rackett enquired about the scrutiny survey and whether it would be presented to Council. He noted the number of items on the rolling work programme and questioned whether there were sufficient resources within Democratic Services.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that the data from the survey would be included as part of the Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12 which would be presented to Council in July. Part of the survey included a question asking whether there were any suggestions for changes to the scrutiny arrangements. This information would be taken into account when the review of the current scrutiny arrangements took place later in the year. If there were any amendments to the scrutiny procedures they would need to be considered by a committee. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she was unsure of the exact procedure at this time.

With regard to resources the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that due to the workload the team had agreed it could manage two task groups at a time. This was before the new Scrutiny Panel had been introduced. There was currently one Task Group meeting and it was unlikely that another Task Group could be set up at the same time. This arrangement was continually monitored and if it was felt that there was sufficient capacity for a second Task group Members would be informed.

Councillor Rackett requested that the outcome of the review was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November prior to it being presented to Constitution Working Party or Council.

Councillor Bell commented that he would have preferred more Task Groups to be set up but acknowledged there was only a certain amount of resources available.

The Chair, Councillor Collett, said that scrutiny played a major part and was seen to be more important than before. It was necessary to ensure that when Task Groups were set up they were seen to be good examples.

Following a question about the Waste and Recycling Task Group, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer stated that officers had contacted the Waste and Recycling

Section Head to discuss setting up a meeting with the Task Group to explain the current position and whether there was still a role for the Task Group.

Councillor Hastrick advised that the review had been put on hold as a business plan was being drawn up.

Following a question about the political balance of Task Groups, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer explained that the new Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel was a formal committee and therefore had to be politically balanced. The Scrutiny Panel would have to meet the legal deadlines including the publication of agendas. In contrast Task Groups were less formal and as agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee were not required to meet legal deadlines. The dates were published on the Council's website once they had been agreed and the minutes were published once the review had been completed. Task Groups did not have to be politically balanced.

RESOLVED –

that the latest version of the rolling work programme effective from 2012/13 be noted.

14 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Thursday 5 July 2012 (for call-in only)
- Wednesday 25 July 2012
- Wednesday 19 September 2012

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.05 pm
and finished at 8.30 pm