

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 March 2013

Present: Councillor Collett (Chair)
Councillor Khan (Vice-Chair),
Councillors Bell, Greenslade, Hastrick, Hofman, Jeffree and Rackett

Also present: Councillors Johnson and Meerabux

Officers: Partnerships and Performance Section Head (for minute numbers 54 to 60)
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

63. WORK PROGRAMME AND NEW SCRUTINY SUGGESTIONS

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the latest edition of the Work Programme and two scrutiny suggestions for consideration.

Work Programme

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she had updated the Work Programme to include all the reports that had been presented throughout the year and those items on which Members had requested updates in the future. She stated that Members would see that some meetings did not currently contain many items and advised that if Members wished to add something to a future meeting they could inform her and she would arrange for a report to be included.

Scrutiny suggestion – Watford Community Housing Trust

The Chair invited Councillor Khan to explain why he had proposed the review into the Watford Community Housing Trust.

Councillor Khan advised that his casework for Housing Trust related matters had increased. He understood that the Trust was currently undergoing a restructure. He questioned the quality of service and value for money provided by the Trust.

The Chair thanked the Councillor for a good suggestion and excellent scope.

At this point Councillor Hastrick declared an interest in the matter as she was on the Housing Trust's Board. She took no part in the discussion about the establishment of a Task Group.

Councillor Bell stated that he had attended the Housing Policy Advisory Group the previous evening. Several suggestions had arisen at that meeting which could be incorporated into the review, for example lettable standards.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would contact the Housing Strategy Officer for further information.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to her report and the list of Councillors who had expressed an interest in taking part in the review.

Members agreed to the list of Councillors and stated that the Task Group should complete its work by June 2013. A report should then be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its June meeting.

Scrutiny suggestion – Property Services

The Chair invited Councillor Rackett to explain why he had proposed the review into the Council's Property section.

Councillor Rackett said that Councillors had wanted to carry out a review of the service for some time but had continually been told that the service was too busy to take part. He acknowledged the Head of Legal and Property Services' comments attached to the report. He said that due to the huge number of assets held by the Council it was important to review the service. It could be added to the scrutiny programme to take place after the Housing Trust review had been completed. He suggested it could begin in the Summer or Autumn.

Councillor Johnson agreed with the scrutiny proposal. He said that he had been asking for a review for a couple of years. He added that it was important that Councillors knew what was happening. The Council was a property rich borough.

Councillor Khan agreed with the previous Councillors. He suggested that the Task Group should be given a time limit, for example it could begin in September for a set number of meetings.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that Budget Panel had received an update at its last meeting. She would circulate the report and minutes to the Scrutiny Committee and those who had expressed an interest in taking part in the review. The report highlighted the work of the Property Service and the latest information on the Council's property portfolio.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Khan proposed that a Task Group be established, commencing in September to review the Property Service. The Head of Legal and Property Services to be notified and advised that if the date were not suitable she should provide another date.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Scrutiny Committee that the Property Team would be transferring from the Head of Legal and Property Services' department to the Head of Planning's department. She was unsure of the exact date as it was dependant on the outcome of a report being considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 April 2013.

RESOLVED –

1. that the rolling work programme be noted
2. that a Task Group be established to review the Watford Community Housing Trust comprising the following Members –
 - Councillor Asif Khan
 - Councillor Jackie Connal
 - Councillor Stephen Johnson
 - Councillor Anne Joynes
 - Councillor Karen Collett
3. that the Task Group reports back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its June meeting.
4. **that a Task Group be established to review the Council's property assets comprising the following Members –**
 - **Councillor Steve Rackett**
 - **Councillor Asif Khan**
 - **Councillor Stephen Johnson**
 - **Councillor Kareen Hastrick**
 - **Councillor Malcolm Meerabux**
5. **that the Head of Legal and Property Services be informed that the Property Services Task Group is to commence in September; if the date is not suitable another date to be provided.**

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer