

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
28 July 2020

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 28 July 2020 at 7.00 pm via Zoom.

PRESENT: Councillors S.Wrenn (Chairman)

M.Birleson, J.Caliskan (vice-chairman), L.Chesterman (vice-chairman), M.Cowan, B.Fitzsimon, G.Hayes, M.Holloway, R.Lass, D.Richardson, P.Smith, S.Thusu and P.Zukowskyj

ALSO Councillor B.Sarson (Executive Member - Regeneration, Economic  
PRESENT: Development and Partnerships)

OFFICIALS Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services)  
PRESENT: (K.Ng)  
Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)  
Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)  
Head of Community and Housing Strategy (S.Chambers)  
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)  
Governance Services Officer (S.Keenlyside)  
Governance Services Officer (H.Johnson)

---

1. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

There were no substitutions.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor P.Zukowskyj and Councillor L.Chesterman both declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of them being Hertfordshire County Councillors.

4. SCRUTINY ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) set out the findings of the former Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) sub-committee on anti-social behaviour.

The scrutiny had started in March 2019 and with the election, purdah and Covid-19 promoting delay.

The report set out the scope of the scrutiny, aims and objectives and findings.

Members noted that:

- ASB was “very low” and there was a higher prevalence of ASB in Welwyn Garden City than Hatfield.
- It was not easy to ascertain if ASB was committed by young or old people due to the limitations of police data.
- Perpetrators might not always be resident in borough and could come as far as London. Welwyn Garden City was an attractive place for young people with good public transport connectivity, a relatively safe public realm, free Wi-Fi and fast food outlets and the Howard centre. It was understood that young people wanted to feel safe themselves.
- There was a fair spread of youth diversionary activities between Welwyn and Hatfield, however those delivered by organisations such as the borough Council and County Council were more targeted for those demonstrating vulnerabilities compared to those delivered by non-statutory organisations.
- There could be a gap in provision as there was a lot of sport orientated activity which did not appeal to everyone.
- The scrutiny panel found that Council teams were doing an excellent job in providing youth diversionary activities.
- From March 2021, a one off increase of £50K would be added to the budget for youth provision and they wanted to ensure that the recommendations from the scrutiny report influenced how that budget was spent. Suggestions were to support KGV Wheels Park and the voluntary sector as well.

Members welcomed the report and the following points were raised:

- It was suggested that the Youth Council or Hertfordshire County Council could help in finding out how best to communicate with young people, so they could access information about youth activities.
- The sub-committee did look at ASB case load and response time for cases reported and it was felt that resources were sufficient if the level of ASB in the borough remained the same.
- Members were concerned about the level of ASB at King George V park and Moneyhole Playing Fields, and the possibility of further police monitoring. Officers advised that the important message was for the public to report incidents to the police. The police could then look at potential hotspots and decide how to deploy their limited resources on a daily basis.
- The Positive Pathways project, which was unique to Welwyn Hatfield and funded by Youth Connections and WHBC, engaged young people positively away from negative behaviours. The Executive Member, Regeneration, Economic Development and Partnerships advised that the Streetwardens were doing more calls to hotspots.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
28 July 2020

- Some Members commented that the report would have been more complete had it included detailed mapping on ASB activities and free youth provision across the borough, in particular the correlation between youth activities and ASB hotspots, such as Welwyn Garden City Town Centre and Woodhall shopping parade.
- Members supported the idea of using the extra budget to support the Wheels Park at King George V park.
- Members felt that the County Council had a greater responsibility in plugging the gap in youth provision.

Members suggested that the fifth recommendation in the report be amended to not only look at the impact of the grant but at the progress on all the recommendations in the report.

Councillor P.Zukowskyj and Councillor G.Hayes then forward an additional recommendation to those in the report:

“For the Executive Member to take our findings to County and lobby them for more resources in the Welwyn Hatfield area”.

Councillor M.Cowan then put forward a further amendment to the previous suggested additional recommendation:

“For Officers to engage voluntary and charitable groups in the Welwyn Hatfield area and encourage them to provide more youth activities.”

It was then put to the vote and

AGREED (Unanimously)

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to the recommendations set out in the report on the Anti-Social Behaviour Sub-Committee (1 – 5, as amended) as well as the additional recommendation (6).

1. To review the current method of communicating with young people so that they are able to access the information they require regarding youth provision and activities available to them and to consider if there are any additional methods that could improve the reach. This should include providing a table of the available activities.
2. That the budget provision of £50,000 for more youth services to reduce anti-social behaviour, agreed by Cabinet for the 2020/21 budget, be ring-fenced and carried over to the next municipal year if not used. This is because of delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Purdah, which may lead to an under spend.
3. That the group support the use of some of this additional budget to be used to modernize the Wheels Park at King George V.

4. That this budget could be used in part to provide a small grant fund for one year, in addition to the current community grant fund and to be applied for in the same way, to be made available for youth provision (11-19 year olds). The provision would have to be sustainable and would have to be in addition to what is currently available.
5. Subject to agreement of Recommendation 4, that a report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time to look at the impact of the grants and other recommendations in this report.
6. Additional recommendation: For the Executive Member to take our findings to Hertfordshire County Council and lobby them for more resources in the Welwyn Hatfield area and for Officers to engage with voluntary and charitable groups in the area to encourage them to provide more youth activities.

5. DRAFT SCRUTINY SCORING MATRIX

Members considered the draft Scrutiny Scoring Matrix – a mechanism to help the Committee decide whether an issue was of sufficient value to warrant the commissioning of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel (T&P) or single scrutiny event. A scoring matrix as a tool to assist Members was suggested by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and went to the Constitution Review Group last week for comment.

During discussion the following points were made:

- If an issue was low priority then information could be added to the Member Information Hub on MS Teams.
- Having the question of resources as one of the criteria ought to be removed from the matrix, although it could still be considered at the time.
- It could be difficult to ascertain the level of public interest in an issue.

AGREED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that Officers rework the draft Scrutiny Scoring Matrix and circulate to Committee members for further comment and agreement following the meeting and prior to the next meeting of the Committee on 2 September 2020.

6. SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH PANELS

To discuss the proposed draft Scrutiny Scoping Document. This would be used by Scrutiny Task and Finish Panels (T&Ps) to define the focus of their scope and plan for the delivery of the scrutiny.

Officers confirmed to Members that they were confident that Task and Finish Panels could still be completed in the time frame of two-three months as outlined

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
28 July 2020

in the new scrutiny arrangements. The time limit of a scrutiny would be added to the scoping document.

It was agreed that the draft scoping document would be further amended and circulated to Members for agreement prior to the next meeting of the Committee in September.

7. DRAFT AGENDA TEMPLATE FOR SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH PANELS

Members considered the draft agenda template for Scrutiny Task and Finish Panels (T&Ps).

Members thanked Officers for their work. It was agreed that the advice from the Centre of Public Scrutiny had been taken on board and the template could evolve as experience with the new scrutiny arrangements develops.

AGREED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to the agenda template for Scrutiny Task and Finish Panels (T&Ps).

8. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2020/21

Members considered the draft Committee's work programme. The work programme enabled forward planning of items to be considered to take place. In addition, the Forward Plan was attached to assist members in considering items for pre-decision scrutiny.

**Statutory Scrutiny**

Officers confirmed that there were two statutory items to be considered by the Committee annually – those on health and crime and disorder. These would be highlighted on the work programme in the future.

**Budget setting scrutiny**

The Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) briefed Members on proposals for budget setting scrutiny which were agreed by the Constitution Review Group the previous week.

Previously budget proposals went to the former Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ROSC) and then Special Cabinet in late January before draft proposals were considered by Full Council. It was proposed that a Task and Finish Panel (T&P) be set up in September 2020 to look at budget setting and the 2021 – 2024 Corporate Plan. Findings would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2021 in time for comments and recommendations to be considered by Special Cabinet in late January 2021.

Members queried what would happen to the quarterly finance reports that were previously presented at the former Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ROSC). Officers clarified that all reports that had previously gone to the three scrutiny committees for noting (including ROSC) would go on the Member Information Hub on MS teams. Members could contact Officers at any time with regards to these matters which were more operational than strategic.

### **Reviewing implementations from scrutiny**

Members were keen that implementations from recommendations from scrutiny were reviewed as a point of practice. Officers confirmed that this would be the case as feedback from scrutiny reviews would be a standard item on the OSC agenda. The agenda template for future OSC meetings would be circulated to Members prior to the next meeting in September.

### **Forward Plan**

Officers highlighted that the Forward Plan would be attached to the OSC agenda for each meeting for constant consideration by members in terms of pre-decision scrutiny.

### **Suggestions for scrutiny**

#### Council Taxi Support Scheme

Members suggested considering the Council Tax Support Scheme which was due to go to Cabinet in November 2020. The Chair and Vice-Chairs agreed that they would discuss this outside of the meeting with the Corporate Director Resources, Environment and Cultural Services).

#### Housing Maintenance

Members enquired as to the follow up of the motion passed at Council on Housing Maintenance. The Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) confirmed that they had provided performance data and there was an opportunity for questioning at the Cabinet Housing Panel (CHP) which was the appropriate forum for the issue.

#### Equalities

Equalities had been a suggested item on the work programme. Members agreed that this was of particular public interest. The Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) clarified that the Council had a statutory responsibility to publish information annually on compliance with equalities. This information however would go on the Member Information Hub. Members could then choose a particular area or substantive issue that they wished to scrutinise and could invite an Officer to present a report to the committee and decide whether to set up a Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel or hold a single scrutiny event.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
28 July 2020

It was noted that the development of the Member Information Hub on MS Teams was a work in progress and further information would be placed on the hub in due course.

AGREED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that a Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel (T&P) be set up in September to look at Budget Setting and the Corporate Plan.

Meeting ended at 9.07 pm  
HJ