

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
27 September 2022

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 27 September 2022 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors G.Michaelides (Chairman)  
F.Marsh (Vice-Chairman)

L.Chesterman, L.Crofton, A.Hellyer, C Juggins,  
T.Rowse, M.Siewniak, C.Stanbury, S.Thusu, T.Travell,  
R.Trigg and L.Musk

OFFICIALS      Executive Director – Finance and Transformation (R. Baker)  
PRESENT:      Service Director – Resident and Neighbourhood (S. McDaid)  
Service Director – Property Maintenance and Climate Change (I. Hancock)  
Assistant Director – Customer Service and Transformation (K. Roberts)  
Legal Services Manager (S. Saunders)  
Service Manager – Building Services (M. Croft)  
Senior Democratic Services Officer (C. Francis)

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30.      SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

The following substitution was made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules:

Councillor Lucy Musk for Councillor Max Holloway.

31.      APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor M. Holloway.

32.      MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2022 (previously circulated).

33.      DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor S. Thusu declared an interest by virtue of him being a Hertfordshire County Councillor.

34.      UPDATE ON GARAGES

Members received an update from officers on Garages Management. The following points were discussed:

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- That the scope included in the scoping document covers areas that were discussed at last meeting.
- A proposed timescale is included in the scoping document, but this will be subject to review and agreement at the first meeting of the Task and Finish (T&F) panel.
- Members asked for rental comparisons to look at private offerings as well as what other Hertfordshire councils offer.
- Members would like to see what garages are used for and noted that modern cars won't necessarily fit in the older garages meaning a number of these are likely to be used for storage. Officers advised that residents are asked what the garage will be used for when a new application is made.
- Members said it would be helpful to have a brief note on how residents can apply for garages; details on what we do to advertise vacant spaces; comparisons on the width of the garages across Hertfordshire; a comparison on price per square footage; price differences for including extras such as electricity and if an individual renter wants to pay for installing EV charging, would this be permissible. Members also asked officers to look at reviewing the policy on how residents can charge vehicles within a garage.
- Members have received a number of enquiries from residents where they have been unable to report garage repairs online, and when contacting the switchboard were unable to speak to someone in the garages team. Officers said repairs are bound by contract and that the switchboard should have been able to put the call through to the team.
- Members asked if we could find out how many garages are privately owned per block, and if the review could include the demolishing of blocks for off street parking and/or social housing opportunities. Officers said they are looking at all options and that a lot of information has been collated on this already.

At the conclusion of the discussion, members were asked to confirm agreement of the scope for the T&F panel, which will report back to OSC in January 2023.

**RESOLVED (unanimously)**

- (1) Members confirmed agreement of the scope for Garage Maintenance, and for a T&F Panel to be set up.
- (2) That the Committee appoint a chair to the Garages T&F Panel via Teams, with nominations of members for the panel to follow.

35. **STREETSCENE CONTRACT**

Members received an update from officers on the streetscene contract. The following points were discussed:

- Urbaser are the councils streetscene contractor. The contract started in March 2020.

- Officers have proposed three meetings at three weekly intervals, but this can be discussed.
- Members said a number of streets in Hatfield and Hatfield Villages are yet to be adopted, these areas have a high number of missed bins. Members asked if officers could establish how many areas are yet to be adopted by Hertfordshire County Council.
- Members asked officers to look at the numbers of missed bins due to there being no access to the road.
- Members receive high contact from residents for things other than missed bins, such as bins not being returned properly; bins blocking the pavement; and paper recycling trays going missing.
- Members asked if there could be more put in place to help disabled residents with regards to bins being returned properly.
- Members asked that officers look at levels of complaints in certain roads to establish whether there is a specific reason for those continued issues.
- Members asked that we look at frequency of collections from recycling banks and asked if we can find out how many trucks Urbaser use as on occasions these banks are not emptied.
- Officers said that there are contractual reviews to ensure residents receive a good service and that penalties are included within the contract.
- Members said that rubbish in Hatfield Villages is an issue particularly around student accommodation and asked if officers could inform residents, by a leaflet drop and/or speaking with the university.
- Members asked whether recycling can be extended to flats. Officers said within the contract there is scope to include more flats. Officers are working on a pilot with Urbaser to look at enhancing recycling across some flats as it is currently not consistent across the borough. Once the new waste strategy is published there may be some funding available to pay for any service change at that stage. Officers will use this pilot to see what works.
- Members said there are currently no plastic recycling opportunities in flats and asked if it is possible to extend the trial for plastics. Officers confirmed they are looking at trialling plastics at some sites.
- Members asked that the trial uses some older blocks as these may be more difficult to service.
- Members said we should be inviting residents to the scrutiny and have the portfolio holder available.
- Members asked why there aren't waste bins next to every bus stop and wondered if some of the street cleansing issues are due to there not being enough litter bins.
- Members said there is no recycling in WGC town centre, and as everything is put in one bin this could be the reason for rats in the town centre.
- Members said a number of residents have asked about cage days. Officers said this would sit outside the scope of this scrutiny and is not something that is within the Urbaser contract and is normally initiated by other services.

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At the conclusion of the discussion, members were asked to confirm agreement of the scope for the T&F panel, which would report back to OSC in January 2023.

**RESOLVED (unanimously)**

- (1) Members confirmed agreement of the scope for Streetscene, and for a T&F Panel to be set up.
- (2) That the Committee appoint a chair to the Streetscene T&F Panel via Teams, with nominations of members for the panel to follow.

36. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23

Officers noted that as usual practice, the forward plan and most recent cabinet decisions were included in the agenda pack in case there is anything on there that members wish to raise as potential scrutiny topics. The draft work programme for the year has been populated with topics raised at the workshop earlier in the year.

It was confirmed that as agreed earlier, both the Garages and Streetscene T&F Panels will report back to OSC at the January 2023 meeting; therefore, we will not require a further meeting be added in February 2023.

Officers noted that a Cross Party Housing Maintenance Contract Mobilisation Board has been set up to oversee the housing repairs and maintenance performance data of the new contractor, including implementation, risks, communication, and monitoring performance. This topic will not proceed at OSC to prevent duplication. The terms of reference for the cross-party group have been published online.

A motion to scrutinise how the council manage the process of consultations was proposed by Councillor L. Chesterman and seconded by Councillor L. Musk.

Members asked in particular to look at how the consultation for community buses was carried out. Members would like to see this done before any recommendation comes from Cabinet to Full Council as it would be more transparent than calling it in. Officers clarified the decision has not yet been made on community buses and the proper approach would be for the decision to be made subject to call in which could be done by this committee. There are strict legal requirements on how consultations are carried out but does not prevent this committee from scrutinising how the process of consultations are undertaken. Members proposed we scrutinise the process and will be calling in whatever decision is made on the community buses, but to look at scrutinising the process of consultations as a high priority.

Members noted that consultations are a tool for councillors to help them make a decision. Officers said that it would be correct to complete a scoring matrix, and this can be done online if members are happy with this approach. Members

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asked who the portfolio holder for consultations is. Officers will clarify this when an email comes out with matrix.

**RESOLVED (unanimously)**

- (1) OSC members to complete a scoring matrix for the scrutiny of the council's consultation process.
- (2) Officers to prepare a draft scoping document to accompany the scoring matrix.

Meeting ended at 8.28 pm  
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