

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
18 July 2023

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 18 July 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber

PRESENT: Councillors L.Musk (Chair)  
T.Rowse (Vice-Chairman)  
G.Michaelides, L.Crofton, M.Siewniak, C.Stanbury,  
S.Thusu, A.Hellyer, T.Mitchinson, A.Nix, D.Panter,  
B.Sarson and K.Thorpe

OFFICIALS S Chughtai, Assistant Director (Legal & Governance)  
PRESENT: R Baker, Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)  
S McDaid, Service Director (Residents and Neighbourhoods)  
C Cade, Governance Services Manager  
R Misir, Governance Officer

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61. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

There were no Member substitutions.

62. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

63. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a correct record.

64. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 8

No urgent business was identified.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor S Thusu advised he is a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

66. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

No Call for Action had been received.

67. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023/24

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Members noted that the draft work programme had been populated with topics raised at a workshop earlier in the year, where it was agreed single reports would come to Committee on housing maintenance and cyber security, and that task and finish (T&F) groups would be established, meeting for the first time as follows: Budget (August), Street Scene (August) and Recruitment, Retention and Leaver processes (December). Officers took the committee through the scoring matrix and work programme.

The following points were raised and noted:

- It would be helpful to be clear whether all relevant housing maintenance issues had been identified within the scope of the work programme and whether previous work could help evaluate the current position, which could act as a 'scrutiny of our scrutiny.' It was confirmed the scoring matrix in the work programme set out objectives for the work, including ensuring recommendations of the previous T&F group had been implemented. It was confirmed portfolio holders would be invited to attend relevant meetings.
- There was a query about the Council's working from home policy and potential issues not being included in the Recruitment, Retention and Leaver matrix, as there is the potential for Members and the public to not be able to contact officers; this is being explored via the customer service panel. It was noted that the scoring for this matrix had been increased from 12 to 14 and it was still being put forward, despite the minimum score normally being 15. Responding to a request as to whether it would be possible for this T&F panel to receive a summary of union grievances, exit interviews etc from former staff, officers advised that there would be oversight of user feedback in a way that did not identify the individuals concerned.

T&F groups will have a minimum of 5 Members, be politically proportionate and have an Opposition Chair. While it is recommended that the Chair be a member of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this is not a requirement. T&F panels can set their terms of reference at their first meeting in line with the panel objectives. **Post-meeting note:** The Chair noted the minimum of 5 would mean one party only had one representative which would mean significant pressure, particularly for the budget, and her preference would be for a minimum of 7; she has raised this accordingly.

**RESOLVED (unanimously)**

That Members agreed the Committee's draft work programme.

68. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

Meeting ended at 7.45 pm