

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
12 March 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 12 March 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber

PRESENT: Councillors L.Musk (Chair)
A.Hellyer (Vice-Chairman)
G.Michaelides, L.Crofton, M.Siewniak, R.Trigg,
T.Mitchinson, A.Nix, D.Panter, B.Sarson, K.Thorpe,
F.Thomson and S.Tunstall

OFFICIALS C. Barnes, Executive Director (Place)
PRESENT: C Carter, Assistant Director (Planning)
S.Saunders, Legal Services Manager
Sheila Saunders, Legal Services Manager
Richard Baker, Executive Director (Finance and Transformation)
Sue McDaid, Services Director (Resident and Neighbourhoods)
Joyce Guthrie, Assistant Director (Leisure & Community)
Pete Frost, Chief Inspector Welwyn Hatfield
Laura Trainer, Governance Services Assistant

96. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

The following substitution of Members has been made in accordance with Council Procedure rules:

Cllr Fiona Thompson for Cllr Sunny Thusu
Cllr Stan Tunstall for Cllr Craig Stanbury

97. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Stanbury, Cllr Thusu, Cllr Rowse.

98. MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 01 2024 (previously circulated).

99. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 11

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
12 March 2024

Member noted the task & finish group advised they will vote on when the recommendations should come back to OSC to scrutinise, Chair confirmed this will be discussed at the end of this meeting.

100. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Cllr Thomson declared interest as member of County Council.

101. CRIME AND DISORDER, UPDATE FOR THE BOROUGH

The Committee received a verbal update and presentation delivered by Chief Inspector Pete Frost covering some aspects of crime and disorder around Welwyn Hatfield:

- Strategic assessment
- Crime hotspot and overview of all crime
- Anti social behaviour matters
- Vulnerability with violence against women and girls
- Domestic abuse
- Serious violence and knife crime
- Recent events from Welwyn/Hatfield
- Stop search figures
- Neighbourhood watch
- Press coverage and CSP priorities moving forward

Member questions and comments:

Member queried the half night shifts for officers and if this will have a negative affect on burglaries, PF advised the shifts are moving by 1 hour and lots of data has been reviewed to ensure the timings suit the requirements, also confirming the figures for burglaries are down by 2%, unsure on what's driving the rates of crime, environmental factors play a big part but the force are working hard to investigate and address these statistics moving forward.

Member queried the amount of familial crime and what can be done to help and support the families affected. PF confirmed work is being done to prevent these cases VIA support systems throughout the county to help identify victims & vulnerable people, along with the use of government backed protective and prevention orders.

Member questioned the percentages on hate crime and school exclusions, PF noted the rise in hate crime reporting is positive as increases ability for safeguarding procedures and that 'mini police' engagement schemes are delivered in schools to help combat the crime rates with school aged children.

Numerous members of the committee thanked Chief Inspector Pete Frost, and his colleagues, for the great work being carried out in the Borough.

102. HEALTH OFFER FOR THE BOROUGH

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
12 March 2024

The Committee received a verbal update and presentation delivered by Joyce Gutherie covering updates including:

- Healthy Hub services including signposting referrals to appropriate health services
- Place based health inequalities project, in partnership with Herts County Council
- Falls prevention programme
- Cancer rehabilitation sessions
- Healthy eating sessions
- Keep fit, keep warm sessions

Member questions and comments:

Member queried the signposting and information given to residents that need separate agency intervention, JG confirmed this information is offered and the stats are reported to HCC, there is not currently any follow up/tracking of the progress on these cases as the data is not collected.

Numerous members of the committee thanked Joyce and her team for the great work and initiatives being delivered to the Welwyn Hatfield community.

103. REPORT OF THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TASK AND FINISH PANEL

The committee received a verbal update from Cllr Hellyer highlighting some updates from the recent panel's objectives around reducing turnover and improving recruitment techniques, improving the handover process with staff leavers and the Councils working from home policies.

Member noted concerns on the working from home policy and that the essence of working together and developing as a team can get lost without the interaction. Cllr Hellyer noted the working from home policy was discussed extensively and each team should evaluate their office/home working on a team needs basis.

The overall recommendations were:

- A formal buddy system should be implemented to ensure all new starters are supported and settled into their role
- The 'top 50 benefits of working with council' should be added to website to emphasise to prospective employees
- Staff surveys should resume on regular basis and to be implemented by HR and overseen by ED for Finance and Transformation

RESOLVED
(Unanimous)

The panel noted the report and confirmed the recommendations as set out in 3.6 of the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
12 March 2024

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

Cllr Musk queried setting a timescale for all task & finish groups to come back to Committee with updates on recommendations for monitoring purposes. It was noted this should be added for the next panel to agree as a recommendation.

Meeting ended at 9.15 pm