

Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13 September 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 13 September 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors S.Markiewicz (Chairman)
M.Levitt (Vice-Chairman)

T Bailey, M Birleson, J Boulton, H Bower, L Brandon,
G Michaelides, N Pace and S Roberts

ALSO Councillors D Bell (Executive Member, Resources)
PRESENT: (for items 71-77)

OFFICIALS Head of Resources (T.Neill)
PRESENT: Client Support Services Manager(F.Cantel)
Finance Manager (J.Cika)
Senior Performance and Strategy Officer (G.Crawford)
Financial Accountant – Capital and Technical (T.Fortune)
Financial and Technical Accountant (D.Williams)
Governance Services Officer (S.Hulks)

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. ACTIONS UPDATE

Members received a verbal update on the actions identified at the last meeting.

20. STERIA PERFORMANCE

Members received a report from the Director (Finance and Operations) which provided information on the Sopra Steria performance for Period 1 of 2016/17. All targets had been met or exceeded. The speed in which benefit claims were processed was the second quickest in Hertfordshire.

Members queried what innovative solutions Sopra Steria had recently suggested. They were told that there had been nothing earth-shattering but there would be some efficiency savings through changes to working practices.

Members asked who was involved in the regular meetings held with Sopra Steria. They were informed that meetings took place on a weekly basis with senior officers and monthly contractual meetings with management. The relevant Executive Member was kept updated.

Members commented that the targets had not changed and they were informed that targets had to be agreed by both the Council and Sopra Steria. They were reviewed regularly, but not always changed as they were already challenging and needed to remain achievable.

Members asked for a breakdown of the severity level 1 incidents compared to those for 2, 3 and 4 so that they could be scrutinised more closely. This was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the report which detailed the achievements against target of Sopra Steria be noted.

21. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT

Members received a report from the Director (Finance and Operations) which provided information on the performance indicators data for the services within the Committee's remit.

Members remarked that there were no identified follow-up actions for Performance Indicators 9 and 10. Officers replied that these indicators were subjective based on residents' perceptions and, as such it would be difficult to identify an action. However, as part of the Customer Service Strategy Review, this would be looked into. A Member asked who he could speak to about this and he was advised to speak to the Cabinet Member.

Members asked who attended the Performance Clinics and they were advised that the Leader, Chief Executive, Cabinet Members and Heads of Service attended.

RESOLVED

That the performance indicators data in the report be noted.

22. REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT - PERIOD 3

Members received a report from the Director (Finance and Operations) which provided them with the monitoring position of the revenue, capital and housing revenue account (HRA) budgets as at the end of June 2016 (month 3).

It was noted that the £24M in the HRA relating to the revaluation gain did not affect the bottom line as it showed in both parts of the operating account.

Members asked why there had been an increase in the HRA balance and it was explained that there had been funds carried forward as some of the schemes had not been completed as soon as anticipated.

Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13 September 2016

Members asked how much was written off each year in uncollected debts. Officers agreed to circulate this information.

It was noted that there was an amount outstanding of £12,900 in respect of car loans. Tighter controls have been put into place to ensure collection of loans when an employee left the Council.

Officers agreed to provide more information regarding the garages in the General Fund and how this was impacted by the transfer between the Housing Trust and the Council.

Members asked for an explanation of what was involved in recharge work. It was explained that a property would be repaired and then a claim would be made to the insurers.

It was noted that Serco had made savings of £129,000 which it was thought was commendable.

Members asked for information on the process for collecting debt. It was explained that the process would be different for different types of debt but that there would be reminder letters prior to enforcement. Sundry debt included such things as fees and charges, garage rents and other ad-hoc debts. It was agreed that information could be provided in the reports of the debt write-off year to date.

Members asked for clarification of the phrase “alternative finance modelling” and they were advised that it was a County Council phrase for the distribution of money when landfill had reduced.

Members expressed concern about some of the figures reported for Campus West. They were informed that the Campus West Cabinet Panel had been reformed to monitor the work and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee also received reports on a regular basis.

Several issues were raised and Members were advised to approach their group representative on either the Panel or Committee to raise them at those meetings.

Members asked about the current situation of Splashlands and were advised that there had been a Splashlands Board meeting in August 2016 and an update could be requested from the Board members.

It was agreed that details of the number of companies who had tendered for the bereavement services contract would be provided to Members.

It was agreed that where questions were raised at meetings which did not fall within the remit of the Committee, these would be highlighted by way of the Minutes so that answers could be provided by the right group.

Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13 September 2016

It was also thought that members of the various Panels or Procurement Boards or on other Overview and Scrutiny Committees could update their Group members at their next group meeting.

This Committee had a particular issue with reporting lines as almost everything done by the Council had financial impacts.

RESOLVED

That the final outturn reports be noted.

23. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

The work programme for 2016/17 was agreed.

24. CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

No items were put forward for Scrutiny.

It was noted that, should Members have concerns about Campus West, they could raise these with the Campus West Cabinet Panel.

Meeting ended at 8.50 pm
SH