

Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee
9 June 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Thursday, 9th June, 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors N Pace (Chairman)
D Bennett (Vice-Chairman)

T Bailey, L Brandon, L Chesterman, J Cragg,
B Fitzsimon, H Morgan, F Thomson and K Thorpe

T Kingsbury – Executive Member Policy and Culture

ALSO J Parry Tenants' Panel
PRESENT: B Rhodes Tenants' Panel
A Bedford Finesse Leisure
E Nicholls Finesse Leisure
N Palmer Finesse Leisure

OFFICIALS P Underwood, Head of Policy and Culture
PRESENT: S Hulks, Committee Manager

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Members were advised that, at the Annual Council meeting on 23 May 2016, Councillor Nick Pace was appointed Chairman and Councillor Darren Bennett was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year.

2. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

There were no substitutions.

3. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. ACTIONS UPDATE

There were no actions to be updated.

6. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 16:

Members were advised that there was an urgent item to be considered at Item 16.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

No questions or petitions had been received.

9. FINESSE LEISURE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 4 (2015-16)

Members received a report which provided details of the work of Finesse Leisure during the period 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2016.

Once again it was noted that the budget gyms had impacted on the Hatfield Swim Centre and Leisure Centres resulting in a loss of income of approximately £120,000 over the financial year. A capital investment programme was being sought in order to improve the facilities at the Swim Centre and increase public usage.

The results at Panshanger Golf Complex were more encouraging with a reported increase in attendance of 5.5% over the previous year.

Stanborough Activity Centre had also shown a small increase in use in this quarter, which is usually its quietest trading period due to the weather.

Members were advised that new car parking arrangements were being introduced at Stanborough Activity Centre across both car parks which would allow for 24 hour charging, new time band pricing and more payment methods.

Parking for residents would remain at £1.50 per visit, any day for any amount of time if they had registered their details with Finesse Leisure. Non-resident parking had been set to reflect the use of the park and other parking charges across the borough.

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Information was provided on some of the special events and community activities that had been hosted within Stanborough Park.

Members commented that they were please to see that the cost of residents' parking had not risen and that there was a 20 minute grace period for drop off and pick up from the park.

Finesse agreed to rectify the issue of a confusing sign about parking at Stanborough.

A Member asked whether investment in new equipment would address the effect of the budget gyms or whether there was a point at which it was better to just accept that you could not compete.

Finesse replied that the investment would be on refurbishment as the facilities were looking dated and the environment was not always welcoming. Work would also be done on reviewing the pricing model and efforts would be made to diversify the product to try and attract new customers.

A Member asked how much the income was being derived from Stanborough car parks. He was advised that the annual figure was between £90,000 and £100,000.

A comment was made about the sign-up period for the gyms and whether a simpler system could be introduced as there were issues with gym members receiving legal threats.

Finesse advised that the agency operating the DD system followed industry best practice and it was understood that the system they used was a fair process.

It was also noted that various types of membership packages were being considered such as Family and Low Use. A current package allowed children to be added on for £10 per month.

Finesse advised that consideration would be given to extending site opening hours and to opening more on Bank Holidays.

NOTED the report and the work of Finesse Leisure during the period 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2016.

Following the report, Members received a presentation (attached to these minutes) which provided them with information on the facilities and offer at Stanborough Activity Centre both over 2015-16 and 2016-17.

10. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

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Members received a report which provided information on the performance indicator outturns for the services within the remit of this Committee.

The Committee was advised that, in future, there would be more PIs reported as there were new ones for the Housing Trust and CW Entertainment. In order to make sure that meetings did not go on for too long, it was suggested by the Chairman that whilst all of the indicators should be included in the report, officers should focus on one or two positive results and any indicators that had not met target. Members would have the opportunity to identify any issues or problems and raise these at the meeting in addition to those that officers had highlighted.

Members agreed to this change in the reporting process.

Members raised the following points:

- Whilst the need for Performance Indicators was acknowledged, there was concern that the Council could sometimes have little influence on outcomes as often these were out of its control.
- Why were only the views of Council tenants taken into account in the Housing PIs? Shouldn't the views of leaseholders also be considered?
- It was noted that there had been a rise in applications for HMOs in Welwyn Garden City. This would of course result in more inspections where they were deemed to be high risk.
- How many households were currently on the Council's housing waiting list?
- It was interesting that there had been no development sites liable to provide 30% affordable housing coming forward in 2015-16 and this was a cause for concern.
- Were there certain areas in the borough where the public's perception of their personal safety was higher than others?

The following comments and answers were provided:

- It was thought that leaseholders views were included in the figures.
- The number of people on the waiting list was available on the Trust's website. Officers would also provide the figures to the Committee.
- It was unfortunate that there had been a delay on one of the development sites that would provide the 30% affordable housing requirement.

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- There were certain hot spots in the borough where the perception of safety was lower. The police were aware of these and they targeted resources accordingly with their community safety partners.

11. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2016-2017

Members noted the work programme for the year.

A request was made for a presentation from one of the local Food Banks as it was felt that not enough was known about the work they did.

Officers agreed to look into whether this would be possible.

Councillor Bennett asked for the new Chairman of Welwyn Hatfield Sport and Physical Activity Alliance (WHSPAA) to be invited to the meeting on 14 March 2017.

12. RESPONSE FROM CABINET TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

13. CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

None.

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

The following item was considered urgent as, to delay the appointment of Members to the Member Health Working Group would mean that they could not undertake their duties for several months.

Members were advised appointments to the Member Health Working Group fell within the remit of this Committee. They were asked to appoint Councillors Fiona Thomson, Maureen Cook and Helen Quenet to the Group.

RESOLVED

That Councillors Fiona Thomson, Maureen Cook and Helen Quenet be appointed to the Member Health Working Group.

That the Member Health Working Group consider its current terms of reference and report any recommendations for changes back to Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and agreement.

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Meeting ended at 9.10pm