

Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee
7 September 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 7th September, 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors N Pace (Chairman)

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

ALSO PRESENT: T Kingsbury – Executive Member Policy and Culture
R Read – Co-optee – Tenants Panel
B Rhodes – Co-optee – Tenants Panel

OFFICIALS PRESENT: S Chambers – Head of Housing and Community Services
S Hulks – Governance Services Officer
P Underwood – Head of Policy and Culture
C Woodhead – Interim Managing Director (WHCHT)

15. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

Councillor M Spinks substituted for Councillor D Bennett. R Read substituted for J Parry (co-opted member).

16. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor D Bennett and J Parry.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. ACTIONS UPDATE

Members received an update on the actions identified at the meeting held on 9 June 2016.

NOTED the report.

19. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 17

There was no urgent business notified.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

Councillor L Chesterman declared an interest in any relevant item with regard to her being a County Councillor.

Councillor H Morgan declared an interest in any relevant item with regard to him being a Hatfield Town Councillor.

21. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

No public questions or petitions had been received.

22. FINESSE LEISURE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 1 (2016-17)

Members received a report which provided them with Quarter 1 monitoring information relating to the service provided by Finesse Leisure.

There were positive results such as an increase in swimming of 9% and an increase in use of KGV Playing Fields. However the wet weather had impacted on the use of Panshanger Golf Complex and Stanborough Activity Centre.

Finesse had identified ongoing revenuesavings of £32,000 which had mitigated a shortfall in its turnover.

As part of their improvement programme, Finesse had rebranded and improved its website. Members commented that the website was a great improvement.

Members thanked Finesse for addressing the issue of confusing car parking signs in Stanborough Park, which was highlighted at the last meeting.

Comment was made that the KGV Pavilion windows were looking dirty and the pavilion uninviting and asked that Finesse address this.

Members asked whether there were any other ideas forthcoming to help to compete against the budget gyms. They were advised that there were several ideas being discussed and that finance was being sought to carry these forward. In the meantime there had been a lot of campaigns run to try and encourage more people to join the Reflex Fitness scheme.

One Member stated that they thought the Golf Complex gave amazing value for money.

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It was noted that Bank Holiday opening might be trialled over the Christmas period for the gyms at either the Hatfield Leisure Centre or Swim Centre, but this would depend on whether it was worth staffing these facilities on what were generally quieter trading times.

It was agreed that the ticket system used for Playday this year would probably continue in the future as it had worked well, but this would be a decision for the Council as the Playday organiser.

Members received a powerpoint presentation on the Panshanger Golf Complex.

It was noted that when private parties were held at the complex, the Fairway Tavern provided the catering. Only when they were too busy would Finesse be able to take on the catering which could be served in their Board Room. This was the only time when Finesse gained financially from catering.

Members felt that the golf simulator was a positive addition to the site and could encourage young people to take up the sport.

NOTED the report.

23. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT - QUARTER 1

Members received a report which provided details of the performance indicators for services within its remit.

As previously agreed, all of the performance indicators were reported with those that had performed particularly well or those not up to target being highlighted by exception at the meeting.

Members were provided with information on rent arrears, property voids and gas safety certification, all of which were performing well.

It was agreed that the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation that were meeting the standards required would be reported.

It was noted that the next CW Entertainment annual report would include details of visitor numbers to each of the main business areas. This data could also be considered by the Campus West Cabinet Panel.

Members asked whether the Universal Credit Scheme had been rolled out across the borough. They were told that only single claimants are currently included in the scheme locally.

It was thought that the housing indicators were performing well under difficult circumstances.

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Clarification was given that, whilst aiming for 100% compliance in respect of all properties having a gas safety certificate, there were some properties that proved difficult to gain access to. However, it was emphasised that there was no leeway given or acceptance of the situation and enforcement would be ongoing to ensure compliance was achieved as soon as possible.

Members asked for information on the whereabouts of night shelters, which they were told were in St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage and Hitchin. They also asked about the number of homeless families. Officers agreed to obtain the information.

Members commented on the number of households living in temporary accommodation and whether this had impacted on the number of people on the Housing Needs Register. It was explained that the list had shortened as changes had been made to the criteria for registering.

Members asked why there was a performance indicator relating to the average transaction value of food and beverage sales at Campus West. It was explained that this helped with the tracking of customer demand and transaction costs and also identified whether the target of £3 per transaction was being spent could be further improved by up-selling.

Members were advised that a funding bid was being prepared in respect of re-providing a Study Room at the Museum. It was hoped that the room would be reinstated in due course.

NOTED the report.

24. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND CRIME STRATEGY

Members received a report which informed them about the Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime Strategy and which sought approval to consult more widely on the document with key stakeholders and residents.

It was intended to take a victim focussed approach to enable victims to feel empowered.

There is an intention to provide a 3rd Party Reporting Centre at the council offices with trained staff so that people would feel that they were in a safe environment where they could report issues such as domestic violence or hate crimes.

A case management system would be introduced and information would be shared with other agencies.

Members asked whether there was a system in place which alerted staff of potential trouble such as violence or abuse when making home visits. They

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were informed that there was an alert on the Orchard system which advised about any special arrangements that were required, such as two officers visiting.

Members commented that there had been some problems in one of the areas of the town and they asked whether the Housing Trust used the threat of loss of tenancy as a lever to make parents more responsible for the actions of their children. They were informed that efforts were made to support young people so that they did not re-offend, but parents were told that their tenancy could be at risk.

Officers advised that there was a magazine, issued to all young people over 11, which provided information on activities available. Diversionary activities were available across the borough and efforts were made to ensure that the activities were accessible.

Members questioned whether the targets that were being set were high enough. Officers replied that the targets had been set at the level as there was nothing yet to compare. These would be adjusted next year.

It was noted that the council would be able to take on work for other agencies, at a cost to the agencies, as the council had a statutory duty to deal with anti-social behaviour and therefore had more powers.

Members felt that the multi-agency community days were a good idea and beneficial to all.

It was noted that restorative justice was an option that could be used to tackle the problem and that the Police were best placed to employ this option.

Members commented that anti-social behaviour was not always carried out by young people and a lot of domestic violence was on young people not by young people. They felt concerned that there could be a stigma associated with social housing as the Housing Trust was so actively involved in this work.

Members said that there had been in-house mediation some years ago and this had not worked. They asked why it was thought it would work this time. Officers replied that previously it had been undertaken by an external partner under a Service Level Agreement. This time it would be done by trained internal staff.

Members asked how and where performance monitoring would be undertaken. Members stated that some Housing Trust tenants were being affected by the behaviour of students at the university and they asked who this should be reported to. Officers said that the tenants should report to their landlord, then the university and finally the Housing Trust who could act as a conduit to the other parties.

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RESOLVED to approve the draft Anti-social Behaviour and Crime Strategy and Action Plan in advance of consultation with key stakeholders and community representatives.

25. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2016-2017

The work programme for 2016/17 was noted and agreed amendments will be presented at the next meeting.

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

There were no responses to this meeting.

27. CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

No items were identified for scrutiny.

28. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Call for Action items identified.

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

There was no urgent business.

Meeting ended at 9.35 pm