

Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
14 March 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 14th March 2017 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, 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, F.Thomson, K.Thorpe and  
T.Kingsbury

ALSO PRESENT: D Bell – Cabinet Member for Resources  
T Kingsbury – Cabinet Member for Policy and Culture  
D Goodson – Tenants’ Panel  
B Rhodes – Tenants Panel  
A Bedford – Finesse Leisure  
S Greenslade – Finesse Leisure  
N Palmer – Finesse Leisure

OFFICIALS PRESENT: S Chambers, Head of Community and Housing Strategy  
P Underwood, Head of Policy and Culture

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52. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

The following substitution was made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22:

Councillor H Bower for Councillor D Bennett.

53. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor D Bennett.

54. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. ACTIONS UPDATE

Councillor F Thomson provided details on the actions update, as follows:

Minute 45 should refer to the Strategic Transformation Plan and not as written.

This topic had been discussed at the last meeting and there was nothing further to add at this time. However, as more information became available, this Committee would be updated.

It was expected that there would be further information on the projects funded by the District Offer in six months and this would be reported to this Committee (Minute 46).

Contact has been made with Sian Price regarding Health Walks and this was being progressed (Minute 46b refers).

Officers will contact the Town and Parish councils regarding joining the Hertfordshire Dementia Action Alliance (not the Dementia Friendly Community, as detailed at Minute 47).

56. FINESSE LEISURE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 3 (2016-2017)

Members received a report which provided monitoring information on the services provided by Finesse Leisure covering their managed sites.

It was noted that visitor numbers for the Hatfield Swim Centre, Hatfield Leisure Centre and Panshanger Golf Complex had reduced compared to the same quarter last year and year to date. This was despite an increase in the number of users for private swims, swimming clubs and school use of the Swim Centre. Also, whilst golf usage had decreased, there had been an increase in numbers for badminton at the Hatfield Leisure Centre.

Work is being done to increase participation in golf with the recent appointment of a new golf professional and remedial work was being undertaken on some of the tees to overcome the damage caused by Footgolf.

It was hoped to encourage ex-members to return following the recent £320,000 refurbishment of the gyms at Hatfield Swim Centre and Hatfield Leisure Centre which were funded directly by Finesse.

The Finesse Executive Board had made the decision to reduce the cost of membership by 25% to £29 per month as it was felt that this was competitive when taking into account the facilities and services that were included within this price.

Members commented that they had visited Stanborough Park during the Christmas school holidays and were disappointed to find nothing open. They also expressed concern that there were no signs up giving contact details should there be an emergency.

Finesse replied that they were endeavouring to extend the usage period of Stanborough Park, but staff tended to work long hours during the current period of opening (1 March to 31 October, the warmer months of the year). Finesse

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had taken the view that it was too expensive to open fully during the off-season when there were too few visitors to cover costs. It was also noted that the café on the south side is managed under a lease to a third party and not directly by Finesse. Finesse had not control over the opening times.

A review of contact information signage will be completed.

Members asked how long a period would be allowed for new activities to become popular and cost-effective before these were changed. They were advised that Finesse held monthly management meetings where targets were discussed. If it was felt that an offer or activity was not going to be profitable, they would react quickly and change the offer.

Members asked whether there was a possibility of the membership fee reducing even further as, even at £29, this was twice the cost of some of the other gyms. Finesse replied that they offered instructor-led sessions, had professionals on site, provided a staffed reception and pleasant changing facilities, none of which was available at the other cheaper gyms in the area.

Members then received a presentation which provided them with an overview of the work that had been done at the Hatfield Swim Centre.

The presentation highlighted the following:

- The gym had been refurbished and re-opened in January 2017
- The 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Centre was held in September 2016 – a free “open” weekend was held which raised £298.50 for the Mayor’s charity
- Hatfield Swim club had used the Centre for its charity fundraising and £2778 had been raised for the British Heart Foundation
- 900 children and adults were learning and improving their swimming skills every week
- Approximately 6,000 school children from local schools attended every month
- New “This Girl Can” adult swimming lessons have been introduced
- Finesse and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) are working on delivering a Swim Teacher CPD course

Work had also been done to address the issues regarding negative comments about the Centre by the public and recent feedback from customers on this have been positive.

Future plans included a partial refurbishment of the Changing Village which would focus on the key areas of dissatisfaction, the toilets, showers and related amenities. This was planned for December 2017 when the centre had its quietest trading period, in order to minimise the level of disruption for customers.

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Members asked whether referrals from GPs were accepted for use of the gym. They were informed that these were accepted but Welwyn Hatfield GPs had been reluctant to make referrals to date because this incurs a cost to the primary health provider, so keeping numbers low.

Members asked whether there were screens in the spin room which provided riders with a film of riding through, for example, Arizona. They were informed that there was not a screen as the Centre provided instructor-led classes which were more interactive for those using the spin cycles.

Members asked why the splash pool was closed during the week. They were advised that there had been problems with recruitment of lifeguards. Finesse was trying to overcome this issue by offering free training/qualifications. However, until a full complement of lifeguards was available, the splash pool would be subject to restricted hours for safety reasons.

Members asked whether, during the refurbishment, consideration would be given to changing the layout of the facilities. They were advised that this was not planned during the upcoming refurbishment, as there was a limited budget for this, but it might be considered in the future.

RESOLVED:

To note the report and presentation which provided monitoring information on the services provided by Finesse and details of the refurbishment of the Swim Centre and the improved facilities available.

#### 57. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

Members received a report which provided them with performance indicator data for the services that fell within the remit of this Committee.

Members were invited to ask questions or comment on any of the PIs.

They asked where the Lifeline service was advertised as they did not think that it was as well promoted as it could be. Officers advised that work was being done to produce new leaflets which would be available soon. A suggestion was made that the service should be promoted via Carers' Organisations and it was agreed that this would be considered.

Members asked for an explanation of PI55 which showed that the percentage of council tenants satisfied with the housing responsive repairs service was below target when other feedback on Mears' work suggested that all was well.

Officers replied that the main area of complaint by tenants was lack of information on the status of a job. Also, if a job was completed satisfactorily and there was then a follow-up job, this could make the tenant feel dissatisfied with the first job.

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It was noted that there was a lot of work being done on a review of customer care and customer satisfaction was included in this work.

Members asked whether the decision to turn street lights off overnight had contributed to whether residents felt safe after dark. They were advised that statistics did not suggest that there had been an impact, although there was negative feedback when the decision was first made.

It was noted that, at the Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison meeting held on Monday 13 March, it had been suggested that there could be changes to the decision on street lighting with the timing of lights out being changed on some roads. A report would be going to the next meeting and, should Members be aware of any areas where changes should be recommended, they should contact the relevant County Councillor.

Members commented that it would be useful to know the demographics of the people who had replied to the survey as they felt that this could impact on the results.

One of the co-optees from the Tenants' Panel commented that he had received comments and complaints from elderly tenants stating that, where hedges had been trimmed and the cuttings not cleared up, the area became hazardous, particularly after dark.

RESOLVED:

To note the report which provided performance data for the services within the remit of this Committee.

58. MUSEUM SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

Members received a report and presentation which provided information on the work of the Council's Museum Service.

Members were given a short history of the Mill, Museum and Bath House and the numerous community activities and events that were hosted over the past year.

There had been a total of 16,467 visitors during the period April 2016 to January 2017 and additionally 1,695 school children had visited as part of an organised school visit.

Several Special Event Days had been held:

- Roman Re-enactment Day
- Vintage Day – which included a Spitfire Flypast
- Teddy Bear Fun Day
- Heritage Open Days

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- Halloween
- Victorian Christmas Fair

Events had raised between £8,000 and £9,000 for the Museum Service.

As space is at a premium and within the legislative framework, the collection is due to be further rationalised following the appointment of a new Curator in March 2017. There are currently about 35,000 objects in the collection.

Officers had also been successful in obtaining various small grants towards the work of the service.

The study room had become reusable from January following receipt of updated fire safety advice, risk assessments and revised terms and conditions for use.

Members asked where the raw product used in the milling had been sourced. They were informed that most of it was sourced from a farm near Harpenden but this was supplemented by an English imported mix which had a higher gluten content.

Members commented that obtaining a season had been an onerous process. It was explained that this was a museum staff training issue which had been addressed.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that there had been considerable staffing challenges experienced in the Museum Service, but all events and activities, including gallery changeovers, had been delivered. Members congratulated officers on the work done and the events that had been arranged.

Officers advised that there was joint working continuing with other museums and the latest grant had been obtained in partnership with five other museums across the county.

#### RESOLVED

To note the report and presentation which provided information on the work of the Council's Museum Service.

#### 59. TOWN CENTRES PROGRESS REPORT

Members received a report which provided details of the work being done by the Town Centres Teams to support and encourage the sustainability and vitality of the town centres.

##### Hatfield

- Animal Cracker
- Have a Go Day

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- The Market
- HealthFest
- Christmas in Hatfield
- Student Lock-in
- HalloweenFest
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Business Breakfasts

#### Welwyn Garden City

- Welwyn Garden Awards
- Food Festival
- Christmas in Welwyn Garden
- BID

Members asked whether a car boot sale could be set up in Hatfield to replace the market which had been moved to a new location as it was felt that this could encourage shoppers back to Market Place. Officers advised that the space was managed by Corporate Property and they would be the people to approach with any requests for it to be used for a car boot sale.

A discussion took place regarding the issue of street drinking in Hatfield. It was noted that RESOLVE had been unable to offer an outreach programme in recent weeks. However, partnership work was continuing and the number of street drinkers had reduced. In addition, preparatory work to obtain a Public Space Protection Order was ongoing.

Members asked why Hatfield Town council had reduced its financial support for delivery of events and programmes in Hatfield. They were advised by one of the Town Councillors that this was because the Town Council felt it could deliver its own programme more cost effectively.

It was noted that the Business Improvement District (BID) company would be set up to start work from 1 April and recruitment is ongoing to full key roles.

Members agreed that the programme of events that had been delivered in both towns was very good.

#### RESOLVED:

To note the report which detailed the events that had taken place in both towns.

#### 60. YOUTH AND SPORT PARTNERSHIPS ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

Members received a report which provided them with details of the work that had been delivered by the Youth and Sports Partnership Officer with support from the

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Community Partnerships Events Apprentice and the Community Partnership Manager.

The report highlighted the events and activities that had taken place during the year:

- Dragons Apprentice Challenge
- Youth, Arts, Music and Activity (YAMA) Festival
- Youth Council
- Welwyn Hatfield 11-19 Group
- Welwyn Hatfield Young Carers Projects
- Mental Health in Young People
- National Playday
- Welwyn Hatfield Primary School Games
- Welwyn Hatfield This Girl Can
- Sir Frederic Osborn Section 106 Obligations
- Hatfield Community Sport Fund
- Welwyn Hatfield Sports and Physical Activity Alliance (WHSPAA)

Members were advised that the schools participating in the Dragons Apprentice Challenge would have the opportunity of deciding which charity should benefit from the money raised. The last of these events had raised £16,000.

It was noted that the results from the “Discover Counselling” programme would be provided to this Committee when available.

The Youth Council had elected to meet weekly and most of their meetings were held in the YMCA in Peartree.

A video was played for Members which showed the preparation and launch of the “This Girl Can” campaign.

The campaign had been extremely successful with 49 partner organisations working together to provide over 126 different sessions featuring 52 different types of sport or physical activity over the ten day period. In excess of 1800 women and girls participated.

Members commended the team for the work that they had done and the positive outcomes.

One of the Members commented that project Freefall was being rolled out the local schools was a very moving piece of drama which provided an insight into the difficulties of being a young carer.

Members were pleased to hear that the Youth Council had chosen to meet more frequently. They thought this was a very positive move.

RESOLVED



To note the report which provided details of the work done by the Youth and Sports Partnership Officer and support team.

61. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT

Members received a report which provided them with an update on the work of the Council to meet its responsibilities for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

It was noted that the Lead Officer for Safeguarding was changing from Matt Rayner to Kerry Clare.

Members commented that they thought the Council should arrange for DBS checks for all Members as was done at the County Council. It was explained that there was clear criteria as to who should have a DBS check. The checks were undertaken for those who were in direct regular contact with the public, particularly the vulnerable.

Members asked how the Council ensured that partners and contractors had adequate safeguarding policies. They were advised that prior to a contract being awarded, checks are made on the contractor's policies. Briefings were also held with contractors such as Mears and TSG.

RESOLVED:

To note the report which provided an update on the work of the Council to meet its safeguarding responsibilities.

62. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2015-2016

The Overview work programme for the Committee will be agreed at the first meeting of the Committee in the next municipal year.

Meeting ended at 9.40pm  
SH