

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
12 March 2019

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 12 March 2019 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors S.Glick (Chairman)  
J.Cragg (Vice-Chairman) (arrived 7.43pm)

M.Birleson, H.Bower, J.Broach, M.Cowan, T.Jackson-Mynott,  
S.Kasumu, R.Trigg, J.Weston

ALSO PRESENT: F.Thomson (Executive Member, Governance and Public Health)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: J.Armstrong-Bridges (Tenants' Panel Representative)  
B.Rhodes (Tenants' Panel Representative)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)  
Head of Planning (C.Haigh)  
Risk and Resilience Manager (A.Cremer)  
Team Leader (Public Health and Protection) (Cheryll Brown)  
Team Leader (Environmental Health and Licensing) (J.Hollingsworth)  
Senior Performance and Strategy Officer (G.Crawford)  
Economic Development Officer (L.Devayya)  
Governance Services Officer (H.Johnson)

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62. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K.Holman.

63. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting on 16 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Members asked that the comment at the previous meeting with regards to asking eateries at local shopping parades to provide public convenience facilities be added to the minutes and the Actions Status Report.

64. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) set out the status of actions from the meeting on 16 January 2019 and previous meetings.

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In relation to minute 25 and the Tree and Woodland Strategy there had been nothing to report in terms of appeals due to the season and lack of leaves on the trees.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the status of actions outlined in the report.

65. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

The report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) set out the performance data collected for those services that fell within its remit. It provided Quarter Three for 2018-19, along with comparative information.

The report enabled the Committee to identify which Council services were improving, not improving or remaining the same in their key performance areas. Service team comments were also included to explain the performance shown, along with any further action needed.

The majority of performance indicators were met and the Chairman congratulated the teams on their hard work.

The Committee discussed performance indicators of interest which included the following:

Performance Indicator 18 - Percentage of household waste collected and sent for reuse, recycling and composting

- Members commented that the target of 42% was very low and that the Welwyn Hatfield Times had reported that the recycling rate had reduced by 9.6%. The Chairman said residents who composted at home could have impacted on the figures. Members commented that more could be done to increase the rate, such as educational initiatives and promotional posters.
- Members asked that Officers produce a timeline that showed when the brown bin charge was introduced, when food waste was put in black bin and, when food waste was put in brown bin again and their subsequent impact on the recycling rate. Officers agreed to bring the figures to the next meeting of the Committee.
- Members commented that the Council could be more proactive and ensure that the right type, size and number of bins was provided to educational institutions and the Executive Member agreed that this would be looked into by Officers.

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RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee note the Performance Indicator data collected and reported for Quarter Three.
- (2) That the Committee discuss and agree any feedback to be provided to the service teams on the trends shown in these performance indicators, which included the following:
  - (a) Officers to look into increasing the target for *Performance Indicator 18 - Percentage of household waste collected and sent for reuse, recycling and composting*.
  - (b) Officers to produce a timeline showing the impact of the following on the recycling rate: introduction of brown bin charge, food waste in black bin, food waste in brown bin.
  - (c) Officers to review the provision of bins at educational establishments, ensuring that the right type, size and number of bins are provided.

66. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2019/20

The report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) set out the Food Safety Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20 (in Appendix A) for consideration by the Committee.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) had overall responsibility for the official control of food law enforcement in England. It was a requirement of the FSA that local authorities produce a Food Safety Service Plan which was approved by Members.

Local authorities were expected to not only undertake “routine hygiene inspections” but to operate a risk based enforcement system that valued educational initiatives along with formal legal enforcement and other interventions such as targeted sampling.

There were no significant changes to how the service was going to be delivered.

The number of premises in all risk categories were reduced for the coming year and the Chairman congratulated the team on their work.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- Officers agreed that the team needed to improve their record keeping so that they could report accurately on the number of staff working on food law enforcement.
- The number of Food Hygiene Requests (FHRs) had decreased to nine in 2018/19 compared to 28 during 2017/18. Members questioned whether the charge of £180 per requested visit be reduced. The

charge was introduced in April 2018 and had reduced the number of FHRs. Officers confirmed that the fee was a cost recovery charge for businesses, arrived at by using a formulae from central government and was listed with the Council's fees and charges. The level of the fee also discouraged businesses with low ratings requesting another visit without doing any remedial work. A sliding scale was put forward however the Executive Member Governance and Public Health said that it could be potentially confusing and hard to administer.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee consider and approve the Food Safety Service Delivery Plan 2019/20, in Appendix A, and recommend to Cabinet that it is sent to Council to be adopted.

67. HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2019/20

The report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) set out the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2019/20 (in Appendix A) for consideration by the Committee.

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA) Section 18, placed a duty on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities (LAs) to make arrangements for the enforcement of health and safety law and to ensure public and employee health and safety protection.

There were no significant changes to how the health and safety service would be delivered however interventions planned for 2019-20 by Officers were more proactive. They ranged from the provision of advice through to formal enforcement notices and prosecutions in order to meet both national and local priorities.

Members noted that the team now had a full complement of staff as a result of the increased budget agreed by Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee consider and approve the Health and Safety Service Delivery Plan 2019/20 in appendix A and recommend to Cabinet that it is sent to Council to be adopted.

68. OPERATION REPRISE AND BALSAM NOISE CALL OUT SERVICES UPDATE

The report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) updated Members on the work of the Environmental Health Team in conjunction with the Street Wardens in addressing noise complaints.

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Operation Reprise provided an immediate noise response service every Friday and Saturday night throughout the year between the hours 22:00 and 03:00. The project was funded by the Council.

Operation Balsam provided an immediate noise response service working as part of a larger police operation targeted to coincide with the start and end of the University of Hertfordshire academic year over a two to three week period. The project was funded by the university and did not include noise issues arising from Halls of Residence (which was covered by the University).

It was noted that:

- There had been no significant changes since the last update.
- Statistics on the service were provided in Appendix A of the report.
- Welwyn Hatfield was the only Council in Hertfordshire to operate such a service.
- Operation Balsam had been a success. The operation was only in place for week in 2018 (for the first time since 2009) due to a dramatic reduction in the number of calls.

The Chairman and Members congratulated the team on the valuable and well appreciated service.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- Noise from firework displays were not within the teams remit, but any disturbance would be enforced by the police.
- Further promotion of the service would be beneficial such as increasing the numbers of leaflets on Operation Reprise and Operation Balsam distributed to residents. Officers agreed to make leaflets available to all Councillors as they were uniquely placed to distribute information directly to residents.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the work undertaken and support the continued service provided by the Public Health and Protection team and the Street Warden team taking part in Operation Reprise and Operation Balsam.

69. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (AUGUST 2017 - FEBRUARY 2019)

The report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) set out the economic development activity that had taken place since the last report in July 2017 and the actions planned for 2019 – 2020 and beyond for Members to note.

The Council adopted an Economic Development Strategy in 2015 and appointed an Economic Development Officer (EDO) in January 2016, with the purpose of providing additional support to local businesses and business representatives.

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The service had grown and an apprentice was being employed in the new financial year.

The report detailed the projects and activities undertaken which included, amongst many other activities, the following: Welwyn Hatfield Business Forum, a business survey, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Seminar, Chief Executive Breakfast Event, Disability Confident Campaign, Online Business Directory, and the Council's sponsorship of the Hertfordshire Small Medium Enterprises (SME) Awards 2019.

The following points were raised by Members and discussed:

- It was questioned whether the issue of converting office space to residential ought to be mentioned in the report as it was an important factor in economic development. The Head of Planning affirmed that the business survey flagged up the issue of lack of start up space and the issue would be brought to the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel in due course.
- There were other tech businesses in the borough aside from Welwyn and Hatfield that could be mentioned in the next update.
- The Hertfordshire Start-Up Programme (HSUP) was a European funded project and Officers confirmed that they would receive funding up until 2023 irrespective of Brexit.

The Committee were keen to hear more about the work of the team. It was suggested that updates be brought to the Committee every six months. In addition, Officers agreed to include Members on the circulation list for the newsletter for the business community and also to work with the Communications team to promote their work.

Members thanked Roche for agreeing to host the All Schools Careers Event, which would bring around 1,000 students from eight of the borough's primary schools in direct contact with employers and training providers in Autumn 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the economic development activity that has taken place since the last report in July 2017 and the actions planned for 2019 – 2020 and beyond.

## 70. CLIMATE CHANGE

The report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) set out the work of the Public Health and Protection team looking at mitigating the effects of climate change as part of the Council's commitment to sustainability.

Climate change was a global issue but the effects took place at individual and local level.

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Much of the work undertaken by the team had “added value”, as the proactive approach also provided savings for the Council, improved employee health and wellbeing and improved productivity.

There was ongoing scope for the work and for the encouragement of other teams to identify positive measures for mitigation.

Members noted that:

#### Staff Travel

- The Council had operated an electric car club scheme provided by ECar Club (a subsidiary of Europcar) since June 2017.
- The scheme enabled employees to use one of the vehicles for business mileage during working hours, thereby saving on mileage costs as well as CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.
- Outside of working hours, the cars were available to hire by members of the public at an hourly rate.
- Since the scheme began, and as of 1 March 2019, staff had travelled 15,200 miles, and members of the public 8,300, with the result of saving 5.4 tonnes of Co2 being released into the atmosphere.

#### Energy Efficiency

- The Herts Warmer Homes initiative enabled those on benefits or a low income to have loft insulation or new heating systems for no charge or a small contribution. Those that were not eligible under the scheme could liaise with Hertshelp to benefit from energy efficiency measures.
- Council teams were reviewing their energy suppliers with the aim of having just one supplier and ensuring regular meter readings were given. The name of the main supplier was subsequently circulated after the meeting.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- The Tenants Panel Representatives were unaware of the Herts Warmer Homes initiative, however Officers confirmed that the scheme was only available to owner occupied or private tenants.
- The pool bikes scheme would be reviewed as the bikes were only occasionally used.
- The Employee Travel Club with Arriva Buses, which encouraged the use of public transport, would also be reviewed.
- Officers agreed to increase marketing to new residential flats in the area, following a 10,000 leaflet drop within 1 mile radius of the Welwyn Garden town centre at the start of the E-Car scheme.

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RESOLVED:

That the Committee note and support the work mitigating climate change carried out by the Public Health and Protection team.

71. DRAFT ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019 - REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 6.3(C) OF THE CONSTITUTION

The draft report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) set out the Environment and Overview Scrutiny Committee work over the municipal year 2018-19.

Under Article 6.3(c) of the Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny Committees were to report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate. The report was in accordance with that requirement.

Members approved the draft report, which would be presented to Annual Council on 20 May 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the draft Environment Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report together with recommendations for the Committee's future work programme and for the final report to be presented to Annual Council, 20 May 2019.

72. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The pro-forma which set out the Committee's overview work programme 2018/19 had been updated since the last meeting to enable forward planning of items to be considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's approve the updated Environment and Overview Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme 2018/19.

The Executive Member and Members thanked the Chairman for their exemplary chairman skills and for facilitating open discussion over the course of the municipal year.

The Chairman said it had been a privilege to chair the meeting and that the Committee had worked well as cross party group. She wished Members well in the elections and thank all of the Officers who had presented to the Committee for their hard work.

Meeting ended 8.55pm  
HJ