

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL – 22 MAY 2017

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE)

RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/2017 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018 – REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 6.3(C) OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. FUNCTIONS AND ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

The main functions of the Committee relate to the conduct of comprehensive reviews and the scrutiny of the Council's policies, strategies or operations relating to accountancy, internal audit, information technology, E-Government, insurance, risk management, council tax, business rates, benefits administration, property services, human resources, health and safety, legal, governance services, elections, local land charges, corporate policy, corporate consultations and communication.

Additional items for the work programme can be generated by the Councillor Call for Action. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 both contain powers for Members to help them tackle local problems on behalf of their constituents. Councillors have the ability to call for debate and discussion at Committee on a topic of neighbourhood concern and this is known as "Councillor Call for Action" (CCfA).

All Overview and Scrutiny Committees have a standing item on the Agenda for any Councillor Call for Action items. No issues have been discussed under this heading during 2016/2017.

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

2. WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee met five times during the municipal year 2016/2017 and dealt with a range of issues.

Issues that have been considered by the Committee include the following:

Topic	Meeting	Minute
Complaints Monitoring	18 July 2016	11
Employee Turnover	19 January 2017	37

Topic	Meeting	Minute
Financial Outturn Report 2015-2016	18 July 2016	12
Salary Benchmarking Report	22 February 2017	46
Apprenticeship Levy	22 February 2017	47

2.1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS

(Minutes 12, 22, and 31 refer)

The Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received monitoring reports on the revenue and capital budgets. The revenue budget monitoring reports of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presented key financial information on the position of the revenue budget at Periods 3, 6 and 9 and highlighted the changes made by the Cabinet to the budget. The reports also covered the budget monitoring process and risk management, the position of the ring fenced housing accounts, the position of the growth and savings identified for 2016/2017, outstanding debts on the debtor system and the rechargeable works accounts positions.

The Capital budget monitoring reports of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) provided information on capital spending and forecast positions. The reports also detailed areas of risk management associated with the capital budgets.

Members were advised that the Housing Revenue accounts would be reported to this Committee in future.

2.2 THE BUDGET MEETING – 19 January 2017.

(Minute 38 refers)

The meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2017 was largely dedicated to the consideration of the proposed budget reports of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), including the:

- General Fund Budget
- Capital Programme
- Housing Revenue Account Budget
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Treasury Management and Investment Strategy

Officers answered Members' questions on a number of points on the budgets and financial strategies.

2.3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(Minutes 10, 21, 30 and 48 refer)

The Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received quarterly monitoring reports on the suite of performance indicators that fall within its remit. This

enabled the Committee to identify which of the Council's services were improving, not improving or remaining the same in their key performance areas.

2.4 SOPRA STERIA CONTRACT MONITORING (Minutes 9, 20, 29 and 44 refer)

It was noted that the collection of business rates was slightly below target for 2016/17. This was partially due to more businesses paying over twelve months rather than ten months and spreading their payments across the whole year. This left the Council with less time to collect residual payments. Council tax collection was ahead of target but slightly down on the previous year. This could be due to the welfare reform changes and particularly the benefit cap which had reduced income in a number of households.

2.5 ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are able to appoint Scrutiny Sub-Committees to undertake time-limited focused scrutiny exercises on issues that they feel need particular attention. Recommendations from the Scrutiny Sub-Committees are referred to Cabinet. The Constitution shows that the Administration and Opposition Groups have the right within the Municipal Year to have one scrutiny topic referred to a Sub-Committee. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are also able to appoint Review Groups to carry out lighter touch scrutiny exercises.

At the meeting of the Committee on 22 July 2015, it was agreed to appoint a sub-committee to undertake a review on Council Tax Debt Recovery. This exercise has been completed and reported to Cabinet.

2.6 WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018

The work programme for the Committee will be set at the first meeting of the municipal year. A copy of the draft programme with details of regular topics is attached at Appendix A.

3 RECOMMENDATION

That this report on the working of the Committee, together with recommendations for the Committee's future work programme, in accordance with Article 6.3(C) of the Constitution, be noted.

Nick Long
Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance)
4 May 2017