

Part 1

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Wards: All

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 MARCH 2019
COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2019
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE)

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 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 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Council note the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report together with recommendations for the Committee's future work programme.

3 FUNCTIONS AND ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1 Local Government scrutiny is about reviewing decisions made by the Executive (Cabinet) and holding the authority to account. There are three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (EOSC), which undertake policy review, policy development and scrutiny functions (conferred by Sections 9F to 9FI of the Local Government Act 2000 [as amended]).

3.2 The main functions of EOSC are the conduct of comprehensive reviews and the scrutiny of the Council's policies, strategies or operations relating to the following areas (as outlined in the Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, Responsibility of Functions):

- Planning (except planning policy, development matters)
- Building control
- Transportation (excluding transportation policy development matters),
- Parking services
- Economic development
- Environmental health, pollution control, public health, climate change, animal welfare
- Licensing (except for those matters dealt with by a Committee or subcommittee set up under the Licensing Act 2003 or by the Hackney Carriage Committee)
- Environmental services, namely waste services, contract services, landscape and ecology services, fleet and workshop management

- 3.3 The Committee can make recommendations to full Council and/or Cabinet in connection with the discharge of any functions.
- 3.4 The Committee takes a non-partisan approach, which brings with it a diverse and deeper understanding of the impact of the decisions being made on the residents of Welwyn Hatfield.

4 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The Membership of the Committee consist of eleven Council Members and two co-opted Members from the Tenants' Panel.

4.2 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

- 4.3 An annual work programme for the areas Members wish to scrutinize is set at the start of the municipal year in liaison with the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) and relevant Officers.

- 4.4 Additional items for the work programme may be generated by:

- a) A request from Members (such as that which resulted in the EOSC Recycling Performance report and the Community Toilet Scheme).
- b) A request from Members under Consideration of Items for Scrutiny on the meeting agenda.
- c) A Councillor Call for Action (CCfa) whereby a Councillor calls for debate and discussion at Committee on a topic of concern to their residents. There were no CCfa this municipal year.
- d) "Call in", whereby the Committee can monitor decision making by the Executive and "call in" a decision made by Cabinet but not yet implemented. No decisions were called in this municipal year.
- e) The creation of scrutiny subcommittees or a policy development review committee.

5 WORK OF THE COMMITTEE 2018/19

- 5.1 The Committee met five times during the municipal year 2018/2019 and dealt with a range of issues and received a number of presentations from the service areas within its remit.
- 5.2 Standing items on the agenda considered at each meeting included the Performance Indicator Report which covered all service areas within the Directorate of Public Protection, Planning and Governance.
- 5.3 There were annual reports, which included CP Plus Performance, Economic Development Activity, Food Safety Service Delivery Plan, Hackney Carriage Enforcement, John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance and Street Wardens. Other topics included updates on Pest Control, Resilience, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Eat Out Eat Well and Climate Change.
- 5.4 In total, the Committee has considered 29 topics over the year, and performed primarily an overview function in this respect.

5.5 The Committee has been successful in making recommendations to Cabinet that have been accepted and implemented, most notably the Tree and Woodland Strategy (less Policy 2), Street Trading Policy and the Statement of Principles (Under the Gambling Act 2005) Policy.

5.6 The Committee has also successfully scrutinized a topic via the creation of a subcommittee as well as reviewed policy:

6 ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

6.1 Scrutiny subcommittees are task and finish groups which undertake focused scrutiny on issues that Members feel need particular attention. They are an opportunity for Members to scrutinise a topic in much more depth than is possible at EOSC. They can recommend improvements to the Council's performance which are then considered by Cabinet.

6.2 As per the constitution, the Administration and Opposition Groups each have the right within the municipal year to have one scrutiny topic referred to a Subcommittee.

6.3 Parking on Verges and Footpaths

6.4 The subcommittee was set up following agreement at EOSC on 13 November 2018. Its remit was to examine "how the Council could move forward with restricting parking on verges and footpaths given the impracticability of the current by-law".

6.5 In total there have been two meetings so far and the membership consists of Councillors M.Cowan (Chairman), H. Bromley, J.Broach and S.Markiewicz.

6.6 The recommendations will be reported direct to Cabinet and the outcome brought back to the Committee in the new municipal year.

7 POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

7.1 As per the Constitution the Committee can decide that an issue or policy is reviewed and appoint a review group consisting of five members from EOSC. Once it has formed its recommendations, EOSC then makes the recommendations to Cabinet.

7.2 Taxi Terms and Conditions Review Group

7.3 At the meeting of EOSC in September 2018 it was agreed that a Policy Review and Development Group would be set up to help research, formulate and consult on a revised Hackney Carriage policy in connection with wheelchair accessible hackney carriage vehicles (WAVs).

7.4 In total there were four meetings and the membership was formed by Councillors H.Bower, M.Cowan, J.Cragg, G.Hayes and R.Trigg.

7.5 The revised taxi terms and conditions were presented to EOSC at the January 2019 meeting and went out to consultation. Two public meetings are to be held in late March 2019. Following the consultation, the policy will be updated as necessary and then recommended to Cabinet for consideration.

8 CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

- 8.1 At EOSC on 11 June 2018, a Member raised an issue relating to the proposed pedestrianisation measures in Welwyn Garden City town centre (most notably the relocation of the taxi rank). As a result it was agreed that equipment to measure noise pollution and possibly air pollution would be made available during the trial so to ensure the health and wellbeing of nearby residents could be taken into account by decision makers.

9 COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

- 9.1 The draft programme for the first meeting in the municipal year (in June 2019) includes the following topics:

- Performance Indicators Annual Report and Quarter 4.
- Environmental Services Annual Performance Report and Quarter 3 and 4.
- Public Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- CP Plus Annual Performance Report.
- John O'Connor Performance Report.
- Draft Allotment Strategy.
- Food Safety Performance Review.
- Taxi Terms and Conditions.
- Actions Status Report.

- 9.2 Members of the Committee can, during the course of the year, add items within the remit of the Committee (as outlined in section 3.2 of this report) that they wish to be considered and discussed.