

Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
7 October 2019

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Monday 7th October 2019 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors S.Markiewicz (Chairman)
G.Michaelides (Vice-Chairman)

M.Birleson, J.Broach, P.Hebden (substituting for S.Thusu), S.Kasumu, L.Musk, H.Quenet, J.Quinton, J.Skoczylas and P.Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors D. Bell (Executive Member, Resources)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) (K. Ng)
Head of Resources (R. Baker)
Head of Human Resources (J. Pilbeam)
Senior Business Partner (Y. Krishnan)
Client Support Services Manager (F. Cantel)
Senior Performance & Strategy Officer (G. Crawford)
Governance Services Officer (G. Paddan)

10. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

The following substitution of Committee Member had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules:-

Councillor P. Hebden for S. Thusu.

11. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S. Thusu.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. ACTIONS UPDATE

The status of actions agreed at the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 18 June 2019 in the report of the Corporate Director (Resources Environment and Cultural Services) was noted.

14. SOPRA STERIA CONTRACT MONITORING 2019-2020

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), which provided the Committee with an analysis of the service performance for Sopra Steria against contractual key performance indicators and service level targets for benefits, council tax, business rates, Information Communication Technology (ICT), contact centre, reception and switchboard.

The overall performance had been good since the commencement of the partnership despite the period of economic uncertainty the Council had gone through and the welfare reform changes which have impacted on performance.

Performance for some of key performance indicator for Quarter 2, April 2019 to June 2019 was shown in Appendix A.

The Committee noted that there had been an increase in telephone and email contacts for Quarter 1 and performance has had an impact by long term staff sickness absence. In order to help the situation, temporary resource had been recruited and trained to manage the forecast volume of contacts received. It was noted that last year's Quarter 1 was similar.

The following points were raised:

- Statistics were provided for the last quarter (Q4 customer services – 2018-2019) – it was noted that improvements were made throughout the year.
- The Council's Wi-Fi was down on a week day last week and the Officer advised that the Wi-Fi solution was being upgraded which will see an improvement in the service.
- It was requested that the Appendix A Quarter 1 performance indicators shown on the spreadsheet to include actual numbers (e.g. volume of calls) as well as the percentages. The Officer advised that Quarter 2 would have the absolute values alongside the percentages as requested.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

15. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

Members received a report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) and a presentation on the performance indicator data collected for those services that fell within its remit. It also provided Quarter 1 along with comparative information. Taken together, the report and presentation enabled the Committee to identify which of the Council's services were improving, not improving or remained the same in their key performance areas. Service comments were also included to explain the performance shown, along with any further action needed.

The Officer explained that the layout of the information being presented had changed due to the new software being used. There may be further changes as the software usage is progressed.

Members noted that all of the Key Performance Indicators had been met. The following points were raised and discussed:

- Update on the Debenhams site was requested. The Officers advised that the Council does not own the premises and noted that planning application had been submitted to convert the upper floors into residential units.
- In terms of KPI BPI 02 (Council Tax) – it was clarified that figures change due to peoples' financial circumstances and the level of support provided.
- It was noted that there had been an increase of half day additional staff absence. The Officer explained that a lot of support is available to staff.
- KPI BPI 58 - Comparison figures were requested for occupancy levels of garages. The current occupancy rates were reported as being above target. If possible to do so, officers to provide comparative numbers for similar sized Councils and what means have been implemented in order to improve occupancy?
- KPI BPI 68 – Members were pleased that the number of unique page visits to the Council's One Welwyn Hatfield website had met its target.

RESOLVED

That the Resources and Overview Committee note the performance indicator data collected and reported.

To discuss and agree any feedback to be provided to the service teams on the trends shown in these performance indicators.

16. REVENUE & CAPITAL QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING 2019/20

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the revenue and capital budget monitoring 2019/20. The purpose of the report was to present the General Revenue Fund (GRF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme outturn positions as at Quarter 1 2019/20. These reports were presented and discussed at the Cabinet meeting on the 6 August 2019 and were attached to the summary report. The Cabinet reports analysed the reasons for changes between the current budget and projected outturn.

Members raised questions and sought clarification on the following:

- Quarter 1 monitoring report – a question was raised on the Council's policy on writing off debts. Officers explained that there were different legislation and procedures which affect the type of debt being processed. Officers to provide a note on the write off policy.

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- Temporary accommodation – Members sought clarification on whether the additional grant income received for increased homelessness burdens could be used to offset overspend on additional temporary accommodation. It was confirmed that if this be allowed in the grant agreement, the Council would apply the funding and would be reviewed for the next report.
- In terms of election expenses; a question was raised on how an election is funded? – It was clarified that for the EU and General Election the Council received funds from Central Government.
- The Executive Member for Resources explained that Quarter 1 figures generally show up as higher variance figures and these figures do settle down and show an improved picture by Quarter 2.

RESOLVED

That the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ROSC) are asked to note the monitoring reports.

17. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The work programme for 2019/2020 was noted.

Members were reminded that the 8 January 2020 meeting would commence at 7pm, as this would allow sufficient time to deliberate budget items.

Meeting ended at 8.15 pm
GP