

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
14 March 2023

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 14 March 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE

PRESENT: Councillors G. Michaelides (Chairman)
F. Marsh (Vice-Chairman)
M. Holloway (Vice-Chairman)

L. Chesterman, J. Cragg, A. Hellyer, C. Juggins, L. Musk, T. Rowse, M. Siewniak, C. Stanbury, T. Travell, R. Trigg

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Executive Director – Finance and Transformation (R. Baker)
Service Director – Property and Climate Change (I. Hancock)
Service Director – Resident and Neighbourhood (S. McDaid)
Assistant Director – Customer and Transformation (K. Roberts)
Neighbourhood and Enforcement Manager (K. Clifford)
Service Manager – Building Repairs and Climate Change (M. Croft)
Acting Assistant Director – Legal and Governance (S. Saunders)
Senior Governance Officer (D. Hill)
Information Governance and Member Support Assistant (K. Houston)

54. SUBSTITUTION OF MEMBERS

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

Councillor J. Cragg for Councillor S. Thusu
Councillor L. Musk for Councillor L. Crofton

55. APOLOGIES

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor S. Thusu and Councillor L. Crofton.

56. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a correct record.

57. REVIEW OF PROVISION OF THE DISCHARGE OF CRIME AND DISORDER SERVICES IN BOROUGH

Officers presented an overview of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for 2022/23 and for the upcoming CSP in 2023/24.

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Officers outlined in the presentation the background, organisational structure, responsibilities and key priorities of CSP.

Officers highlighted CSP Action Plan 9 Successes, including:

- Information sharing protocol updated.
- Community Trigger Process refined. This ensures if individuals are unhappy with how their anti-social behaviour is being investigated then they have mechanism to ask for case review.
- Domestic Abuse (DA) coordinator is now in post, DA Forum reinvigorated, new DA Policy and referral procedures. WHBC is Working with HCC to implement wider county strategy around DA.

Officers also outlined in the presentation what's next for CSP, key challenges for CSP in 2022/23, what is going on within CSP in the year ahead and provides a CSP strategic assessment summary, which includes percentage statistics and local priorities, along with an explanation of the statistics.

The following points were raised and noted:

- Instead of solely percentage statistics for strategic assessment summary, total numbers should also be provided.
- A council campaign was implemented in summer 2022 relating to how people can report Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). This may have influenced the police's reporting statistic as members of the public started reporting to the council more. Also the use of community trigger is being promoted.
- There has been an increase in ASB cases from housing associations and privately rented properties. The council are working closely with their housing providers to ensure they comply with their legal responsibilities to protect their residents.
- CSP applied to Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for funding for target hardening around community triggers.
- With regards to incidents of youth roof jumping, CSP try to identify the responsible individuals through CCTV. There are projects underway, and research being conducted into potential remedies to address CSP town centre issues.
- A query was raised as to whether the increase in child protection referrals statistics is considered a crime in the statistics or solely a referral. It was confirmed they were considered referrals. It was noted that there was an increase in referrals into children's services across all strands and an increase in reporting of child exploitation.

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- It was confirmed that CSP work closely with schools to provide training where able. Additional funding was trying to be accessed to provide further training and schools were consulted with on the type of education programmes they would like to see on a sustainable basis.
- It was confirmed that the Community Safety Action Plan for 2023/24 will show set tasks and their outcomes. It will also be more concise following review.
- It was confirmed that CSP would approach a specific partner to assist with action plan where necessary.
- With regards to hate crime statistics, further investigation and more work needs to be done around non-reporting of this and across all protected characteristics.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That members note the report.

58. COVID VACCINE CHAMPIONS PROJECT

Officers provided presentation, detailing a successful bid in Government funding (£485K) to try and improve the uptake of vaccinations. It was to support and encourage the uptake of Covid vaccines in unvaccinated borough residents and hard to reach groups. Officers presented funding objectives and Covid vaccine champions project summary, which outlined costs. Following this, the presentation outlined how the WHBC Project plan was delivered, including: telephoning unvaccinated residents, targeted communications, a community innovation fund and Community champion engagement. Alongside this, explanations were provided where necessary by the officer, including on statistics.

The following points were raised and noted:

- Cannot say every phone call for project made impact and encouraged people to go for vaccines. This project was rolled out in many authorities, so can't make direct link, but, this work and work of other partners, meant an increase in number of vaccinations taken up.
- Cannot say whether there is a set management fee for all projects, as each project must be viewed on own merits. For this project, it was calculated what was thought was needed in terms of managing the project, Project Manager and other costs.
- It was confirmed that champions were recruited for communities, therefore had language skills in particular communities, and relevant officers also used language line and mobile phones to help interpret in different languages.

- It was confirmed the General practitioner (GP) surgeries and the public health team at Hertfordshire County Council helped provide the statistics, information and telephone numbers surrounding those unvaccinated within the borough. These were lists of people from GP surgeries with no records of vaccination. It was confirmed the campaign was in addition to messaging from GPs to individuals. GPs also engaged with residents.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That members note the report.

59. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GARAGE MAINTENANCE TASK AND FINISH PANEL

Task and Finish Chair (T&F Chair) outlined recommendations from the panel, alongside some of the key elements which helped inform recommendations. Stated, at the time of panel, there was a full review of the garage services underway, but not completed. There were no results of the review, so recommendations are to be considered alongside the outcome of review. Background on the recommendations and system improvements was also provided, providing commentary and explanations surrounding the report. The decision to increase the rents was already made outside of the Task and finish Panel as part of budget discussions, therefore recommendation 3.8.3 was not taken into consideration. Slight amendment to report, the select garage anywhere function already implemented (3.10.3. system improvements).

The following points were raised and noted:

- When review is done of the garages not in use, consider age of the garages. Also need to be aware that there are more self-employed now, who will need to use garages for storage, therefore should not make process too difficult.
- Update to be provided on the timelines for 3.10.3 in six-seven months, around September/October.
- Regarding the use of land and occupancy rates, ensure asbestos surveys are done.
- Error clarified in Appendix A. There was originally no differential rate between council tenants and non-council tenants. It was confirmed that council tenants do not pay VAT. One of the rates should be without and the other with VAT, both show the same amount currently for the council.
- Overall aim of the scrutiny was to ensure the council obtained best possible income from garages, this was part of the scrutiny and was an aim set by the task and finish group.

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- Regarding garage sizes, team constantly review those sites where we can do more with them, accepting still the need for garages because residents use them for storage and are a cost-effective way of storing goods and belongings. There is an ongoing maintenance programme.
- Concerning asbestos surveys, this is part of planned maintenance and programme.
- One panel recommendation was to look at pricing because comparatively, we were cheaper versus other boroughs and private services, but budget setting took place outside of the garage meeting, so price wasn't discussed at panel. There was a budget task and finish group, which put forward the suggestion for the increases, and at that point it was agreed by everybody, no objection to charges.

RESOLVED (**unanimously**)

The Committee approved the recommendations that were agreed by the Task and Finish Panel and are detailed in the report.

60. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STREETSCENE CONTRACT TASK AND FINISH PANEL

T&F Chair presented details of panel meetings, panel objectives and the 6 recommendations of the panel. Additionally, there is a pilot scheme in relation to recycling for council flats starting soon. Officers confirmed pilot will go ahead, starting in April. They have been preparing the project, particularly looking at collection schedule, planning the routes and making sure that we've got containers in place to start that project. Officers confirmed one key project in business plan from April onwards is to review the bin bank service for reasons discussed in panel.

The following points were raised and noted:

- It was confirmed panel will be looking at numerous things in bin collection schedule review, including looking at feasibility of weekend collections or providing extra banks. Panel had a large discussion about the bin banks frequency and the issues experienced over Christmas. All options will be looked at during review.
- Fly-tipping and missed bin collections datasets will be presented on the information hub by officers.
- It was confirmed council do have option to extend Urbaser contract and have good relationship with them. If there is a breakdown of service, that Urbaser cannot remedy within the requisite provisions of the contract, the Council can terminate the contract and claim damages.
- Tewin Road depot new recycling site is on schedule.

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- Council reviewed with contractor the disruption after snow in December, there has been dialogue and all parties learnt lessons.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

The Committee approved the recommendations that were agreed by the Task and Finish Panel and are detailed in the report.

Meeting ended at 9.02pm
DH