

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

6 February 2018

7.30 - 8.30 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Bob Davis (Chair)
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Nick Churchill
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor Maggie Hulcoop
Councillor Lanie Shears
Councillor Edna Stevens

Officers

Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place
Simon Freeman, Head of Finance
Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing
Chris Purvis, Sports and Leisure Policy and Development Officer
Adam Rees, Governance Support Officer

44. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Carter.

45. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

46. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

47. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

48. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

49. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

50. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the following responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Scrutiny Committee were noted.

- a) Review of Sheltered Housing (Phase 2) - Final Report

51. **REVIEW OF SPORTS IN HARLOW - INTERIM REPORT**

Chris Purvis, Sports and Leisure Policy and Development Officer, presented an interim report for the review of sport in Harlow. The report set out the differences in levels of participation in Harlow compared with the rest of the UK, the economic cost of inactivity and events taking place in Harlow to encourage participation. Two surveys were being undertaken to better understand any barriers to participation for both organisations and individuals.

It was agreed that information about participation by ethnic groups, as well as a comparison by socio-economic group would be included in the next report to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

52. **REVIEW OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN HARLOW - AGREEMENT OF QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS**

The Committee considered questions to be asked to Universal Credit claimants and related organisations. The Committee considered the questions as attached as Appendix A to the report.

The Committee discussed a number of amendments to the questions proposed by Councillor Charles. It was also agreed that a question to establish the best way for the Council to communicate with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The Committee considered the need for claimants to attend the next meeting of the Committee and agreed that written responses could be provided by claimants and organisations. One-to-one interviews would also be offered to claimants.

RESOLVED that:

- A** The Committee agreed the draft questions attached as Appendix A to the report be used for the interviews with Universal Credit claimants, representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and other relevant organisations as part of the Committees review of Universal Credit in Harlow, subject to the following amendments.

- (i) Question 4 of the Questions for Claimants to read 'Has Universal Credit impacted on your rent payments, and if so how?'
- (ii) The third bullet point of Question 5 of the Questions for Claimants to read 'Was seeking help and advice easy for you to access?'
- (iii) Question 5 of the Questions for DWP Representatives to read 'How many and what percentage of claimants are requesting emergency loans or advance payments?'
- (iv) A question is added to the Questions for DWP Representatives about the best method for the Council to communicate with the DWP.
- (v) Question 6 of the Questions for all organisations to read 'What evidence is there to suggest that the transfer to UC has caused
 - Rent Arrears, or increased Rent Arrears.
 - Debt issues for claimants.
 - Referrals to agencies such as the Food Bank/CAB, or an increase of referrals.
 - People to approach pay day loan type facilities to support themselves and their families?'
- (vi) Question 8 of the Questions for all organisations to read 'What is the impact of UC on your organisations resources?'

B Claimants and organisations are allowed to submit written responses instead of attending the Committee meeting, with claimants also being offered one-to-one interviews.

53. **WORK PLAN**

Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place, provided an update of the review of bus provision in Harlow. A report had been due to be considered at this meeting but was now due to be considered by the meeting on 13 March. This would incorporate studies and proposals arising from the garden town developments taking place around Harlow.

The Committee discussed the meeting on 13 March and considered that a Special Committee should be held prior to the elections in May to consider the interim report.

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2017/18. Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing, proposed that the final report

of the review of Civic Pride and Education be considered at the first meeting of the 2018/19 municipal year.

RESOLVED that:

- A** A Special Committee meeting be arranged prior to the elections in May to consider the interim report on improving the provision of bus services in Harlow.
- B** The final report of the review of civic pride and education be considered at the first meeting of the 2018/19 municipal year.
- C** The work plan be noted.

54. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

55. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE