

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON**

13 March 2018

7.30 - 9.45 pm

**PRESENT**

**Committee Members**

Councillor Bob Davis (Chair)  
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Simon Carter  
Councillor Joel Charles  
Councillor Tony Edwards  
Councillor Maggie Hulcoop  
Councillor Lanie Shears

**Also Present**

Councillor Danny Purton

**Officers**

Donna Beechener, Revenues and Benefits Manager  
Cara Coxhead, Area Housing Manager  
Simon Freeman, Head of Finance  
Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing  
Michael Pitt, Environment and Licensing Manager  
Chris Purvis, Sports and Leisure Policy and Development Officer  
Adam Rees, Governance Support Officer

56. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Churchill, Stefan Mullard and Edna Stevens.

57. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bob Davis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8, Review of Universal Credit in Harlow – Interviews with DWP and Claimants, as a Board Member of Harlow Save.

Councillors Bob Davis and Simon Carter both declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 10, Review of Landscaping Services Provided by HTS – Report, as Council appointed Directors of the HTS Board.

58. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2018 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

59. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

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

None.

61. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

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

None.

63. **REVIEW OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN HARLOW - INTERVIEWS WITH DWP AND CLAIMANTS**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report on the review of Universal Credit (UC) in Harlow, which outlined the initial impacts on the Council's Housing, and Revenues and Benefits services, as well as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), claimants and other support organisations.

Representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Harlow Advice Centre, and Harlow Food Bank explained some of the challenges posed by the introduction of UC, both on an organisational and an individual level.

The Committee considered specific issues to refer to Cabinet. It was agreed that the following issues would be raised:

- a) The online applications process can be complex, and maintaining an online journal can be difficult, especially for particularly vulnerable claimants and those who do not have immediate access to a computer.
- b) Additional help is needed to assist certain claimants manage their monthly finances. Monthly payments have caused issues with arrears for some claimants. Allowing more claimants to receive fortnightly payments would help alleviate some of these problems.
- c) There had been a significant increase in demand for support services, as well as a sharp increase in the usage of food banks. This included an increase in the number of young families using food banks.
- d) Residents in temporary accommodation were particularly vulnerable in instances where one week's arrears on rent could see eviction.

- e) It was still too early to have gained any conclusive evidence with regard to rent arrears and evictions. Therefore it is proposed that a further review be carried out by the Committee in six months' time.

**RESOLVED** that:

- A** Cabinet would be presented with a report by the Chair of the Committee setting out the Committee's specific concerns.
- B** It was recommended to Cabinet that it notes the specific issues and concerns raised by external support organisations and contained within their written responses provided to the Scrutiny Committee and contained within the appendices to the report.
- C** It was recommended to Cabinet that it notes that the Committee will be undertaking another review in six months.

64. **REVIEW OF SPORTS IN HARLOW - FINAL REPORT**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report on the review of sports in Harlow, which recommended that the Action Plan, attached as Appendix A to the report, was referred to Cabinet for approval.

**RESOLVED** that:

- A** The Committee noted the findings of the additional information on sport and physical activity participation rates.
- B** The Committee noted the findings of the sport and physical activity surveys as detailed within this report.
- C** The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the Action Plan, attached as Appendix A, is approved.
- D** The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the Council should adopt a target of 0.5 percent per year participation rate increase in sport and physical activity. Active Lives data should be used as the tool by which this is measured.

65. **REVIEW OF LANDSCAPING SERVICES PROVIDED BY HTS - REPORT**

The Committee received a report on the review of landscaping services provided by HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd (HTS). The report explained that a working group between Council Officers and HTS Officers had been established, which had identified short and long term improvements to the services provided by HTS.

**RESOLVED** that the report was noted.

66. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2017/18. It was agreed that a review on the impact of permitted development would be added to the Work Plan.

Councillor Carter questioned the removal of the Review of Church Langley Fund from the Plan for tonight's meeting. In response, Simon Freeman, Head of Finance said that he had looked at the previous review of the Fund which had set out an action plan. Simon Freeman said he would liaise with Councillor Carter and if there were still outstanding issues a report would be brought to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that:

**A** A review on the impact of permitted development be added to the Work Plan.

**B** The work plan be noted.

67. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

68. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE