

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

14 September 2021

7.30 - 9.30 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Nick Churchill
Councillor Tony Durcan
Councillor Mike Garnett (as substitute for Councillor Gareth Williams)
Councillor Eugenie Harvey
Councillor Shona Johnson
Councillor Nicky Purse

Also Present

Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Alastair Gunn
Councillor Andrew Johnson
Councillor Dan Swords

Officers

Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning
Jane Greer, Director of Community Wellbeing
Simon Hill, Head of Governance
Alison Hodgson, Electoral Services Manager
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer

14. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gareth Williams.
Councillor Mike Garnett was in attendance as his substitute.

15. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Nicky Purse declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 11 as her husband worked for Veolia.

Councillor David Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 12 as a site rep for Harlow Allotment Association.

16. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

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

None.

19. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

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

- a) Housing and Accommodation Requirements for Adults with a Moderate/Severe Learning Disability

RESOLVED that the Committee noted that Cabinet adopted the recommendations in the consultant's report (attached as Appendix A to the report).

21. **PRE-SCRUTINY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY**

The Chair invited Councillor Charles to speak about the Community Safety Strategy. He said that one of the focusses would be to confront anti-social behaviour in partnership with other organisations. He also wanted to focus on domestic abuse on a cross party basis. The Strategy would outline how the Council could address these issues as a community leader. In response to questions by the Committee, Councillor Charles said that the Strategy would refresh the Council's general approach to issues including anti-social behaviour to support early intervention and to complement the Resilience Strategy. The Community Safety Strategy would also aim to support third sector and informal groups.

The Strategy would have thematic targets. Whistleblowing processes were already in place, both internally and externally, but he would look at how the Council could act as a community leader.

He wanted to push the Police to be more proactive in terms of engagement with the public, and to see a resumption of engagement following the pandemic.

Engagement with young people would be an important part of the Strategy and he welcomed input from the Committee on how best to achieve this. On the issue of domestic abuse one of the aims would be to ensure that people were confident that they would be supported.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder would be invited to attend the Scrutiny Committee meeting before the Community Safety Strategy was due to be considered by Cabinet.

22. **REVIEW OF TURNOUT IN LOCAL ELECTIONS - INITIAL REPORT**

The Committee received an initial report on the review of turnout in local elections.

It was agreed that question 2 in the consultation would have an additional option 'choose not to vote,' question 3 would be amended to read 'if you choose not to vote' and the first option on question 5 would be split into two separate options.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- A** Noted the information within the report as background and future government proposals.
- B** Approved the questions (attached as Appendix D to the report) for consultation subject to the following amendments:
 - i) Question 2 in the consultation would have an additional option 'choose not to vote.'
 - ii) Question 3 would be amended to read 'if you choose not to vote.'
 - iii) Question 5 would be split into two separate options.

23. **PADDLING POOLS**

The Chair explained that Councillor Charles had been asked to attend to speak about paddling pools following a request made to the Chief Executive in accordance with the scrutiny procedure rules.

Councillor Charles explained that the delay in the opening of the Town Park was caused by a sealant not drying fully before the initial opening. This required specialist contractors to fix. Pending an internal investigation he was limited on what he could tell the committee. He had however reviewed the project planning in place and had requested a four week buffer no work period before opening in future years.

Councillor Charles said the Council's previous policy for toilet provision at paddling pools and splash parks was to work with co-located facilities. There would need to be a considered approach for providing further toilet provision as these facilities would require ongoing supervision.

24. **REFUSE COLLECTION**

The Chair explained that Councillor Gunn had been asked to attend to speak about refuse collection following a request made to the Chief Executive in accordance with the scrutiny procedure rules.

Councillor Gunn said that the decision to suspend separate food waste collection was based on staff shortages experienced by Veolia. The Council was adopting a robust approach on managing the contract with Veolia. There were a number of wider issues, including a national shortage of HGV drivers. Communication with the wider public could be improved if the Council was made aware of potential issues by Veolia ahead of time.

He explained that there was a need to rebalance waste collection routes as new developments in Harlow meant that there were more collections at the beginning of the week. Veolia needed to present a viable case on how the routes could be rebalanced. This expected to take until at least Christmas to be finalised.

25. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2021/22.

It was agreed that Councillors David Carter and Tony Durcan would assist Officers with the review of allotments.

Councillors Eugenie Harvey, Maggie Hulcoop, Shona Johnson, Nicky Purse and Tony Durcan would assist with the review of support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual harassment.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

26. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

27. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE