

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON TUESDAY, 12TH JUNE, 2018 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Cathryn Henry (Chairman), Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Vice-Chairman), Ian Albert, Kate Aspinwall, Sam Collins, Steve Deakin-Davies, Jean Green, Steve Jarvis, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Oliver, Janine Paterson, Val Shanley and Martin Stears-Handscomb

In Attendance:

Councillor Lynda Needham (Leader of the Council), Councillor Michael Weeks (Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment), David Scholes (Chief Executive), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Rachel Cooper (Controls, Risk and Performance Manager), Chloe Hipwood (Service Manager - Waste and Recycling) and Hilary Dineen (Acting Committee and Member Services Manager)

Also Present:

At the commencement of the meeting 5 members of the public.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Marment.

2 MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2018

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 March 2018 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman thanked those who were no longer members of this Committee - Steve Hemingway (Vice-Chairman), Clare Billing, John Booth, Bill Davidson and Frank Radcliffe;
- (2) The Chairman welcomed the new members of the Committee - Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Sam Collins, Paul Marment, Helen Oliver and Martin Stears-Handscomb;
- (3) The Chairman welcomed Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg as the new Vice-Chairman of the Committee;
- (4) The Chairman reminded everyone that, in accordance with Council policy, this meeting was being audio recorded;

- (5) The Chairman asked Members and speakers to speak into the microphones;
- (6) The Chairman drew attention to the agenda front pages and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question;
- (7) The Chairman advised that the tabled paper was an easy to digest summary of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee function.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Richard Hatch thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and raised a number of questions regarding the Waste and Recycling contract as follows:

- How much planning did the Council do and why did it go so wrong?
- Why weren't enough food caddies ordered for all the properties in the district?
- Why were routes not documented and shared with Urbaser?
- What were the issues with the data transfer?
- What can the Council do to ensure that the public has faith in its ability to deliver future large scale contracts / projects?

Mr Hatch questioned how residents could have faith in the service.

6 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

No urgent or general exception items were received.

7 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Since the last meeting, no decisions had been called-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8 WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES

Councillor Michael Weeks, Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment and the Service Manager – Waste and Recycling thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding the issues and problems faced following the implementation of the new waste and recycling contract.

Councillor Weeks reminded Members that this was his third appearance before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this calendar year.

He cautioned that it may not be possible to answer questions this evening about the detail of what had gone wrong as they had not yet been able to undertake any investigations and had not yet got sufficient data.

The Waste Team had been spending all their time getting the contract up and running.

He would identify the main issues and explain what had been done or what they were going to do to address those issues.

The issues mainly related to brown bins not being collected and this was due to data not being on the system, it was not known why this had happened.

Veolia, the outgoing contractor, had not left the service in a tidy manner.

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The new vehicles had not been delivered on time and therefore they had relied on hired vehicles, some of which were not up to the job, but they were now hiring newer vehicles and the first of the 50 new vehicles were starting to be delivered, with the balance being due in August.

A number of staff decided not to turn up for work on the first day

Switchboards were swamped as were message boxes.

A significant minority of residents had been affected.

Things were getting better, with queries reducing.

Urbaser were spending tens of thousands of pounds on the contract and were working extra hours to solve the problems.

Urbaser had now fixed the data issue and everyone who had subscribed to the brown bin collection service was now on the schedule.

It was hoped that collections would be better from now on.

The Service Manager – Waste and Recycling and the Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment addressed the questions asked by Mr Hatch during public participation as follows:

Planning

- A lot of planning work had taken place;
- First meeting regarding procurement started in 2014;
- Procurement took just under a year;
- The bids received during this process were examined and evaluated by officers from East Herts and North Herts as well as consultants;
- Urbaser scored top for performance and value for money.

Caddies

- The Council ordered enough caddies;
- The caddies were delivered to a storage facility, this process was managed by a sub-contractor of Urbaser;
- As a consequence it was found out late in the day that not all of the caddies had been delivered;
- New stock had since been delivered;
- East Herts stock had been used in the interim;
- Most properties had now been delivered to.

Data

- The old contract ran on a paper based system;
- They had been working to try to update this to a 21st century system;
- A lot of information was known by the operatives, but had not been recorded, therefore this data was difficult to transfer to the new system;
- Existing staff had spent a lot of time updating the information;
- Urbaser ran two systems, a payment system and a waste management system and the data needed to be transferred from the payments system to the collection system;
- One issue identified was that residents were allowed in the early stages to input data into address fields and spelling errors had not been picked up;
- Some people had signed up who were not residents of the District;
- There had been some issues regarding boundary streets.

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The Chairman acknowledged that officers were still working to sort out the problems and that this should remain their focus.

Questions that could not be answered now, would be recorded and circulated to Members of the Committee and would be answered at a later date.

At the end of this debate the Committee would decide how they would undertake a review.

Members commented that the perception was that a substantial number of things went wrong.

There had not been a satisfactory payment system regarding the garden waste collection in place

They observed that this was not a novel system as other Councils performed this task and expressed concern that the Council enlisted a service that did not work for a period of time.

Members queried what "significant minority" meant and queried whether the customer was making payments to the Council or Urbaser.

In respect of vans, Members commented that it was clear that there were issues that could have been avoided if local knowledge had been passed on and queried why it had not been recognised that the lack of this sort of information may cause problems.

Councillor Weeks advised that the significant minority was between 2,000 and 5,000 people affected.

The Service Manager – Waste and Recycling advised that they were conscious of reports about whole streets being missed and this would be investigated and an answer provided to the Committee at a later date.

Members commented that the initial communication regarding the new garden waste collection service had not been delivered to all properties and asked for information regarding the completeness of the circulation of these leaflets.

Members noted that special collections of batteries and textiles had not been collected asked They asked for reassurance that this was now being done and queried how long people had waited for these and food waste to be collected.

Hitchin Committee had suggested that the next payment date should be postponed.

Councillor Weeks advised that textiles and batteries should be collected and any non collection was down to the staff on the rounds and this was being managed by Urbaser.

Members commented that the transition between Veolia and Urbaser appears felt quite different in North Herts to the experience in East Herts and asked what East Herts had done more successfully than North Herts.

In respect of the delivery of caddies, Members questioned whether the Council should have been more involved

In respect of staff, Members asked whether the staffing levels were now correct and whether they were permanent staff.

They were concerned that in this day and age of technology, the solution given to customers was to paint the number of their house on their bin and queried whether there was a documented recovery plan and how far away a smooth running service was.

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Councillor Weeks advised that the transition in East Herts had gone fairly smoothly, however they did not opt for a chargeable garden waste service and they did not have much change in services, therefore the local knowledge was retained.

The Garden Waste and food waste collections were new services for North Herts.

The Waste Team had been understaffed and this had an impact and they were still operating with some agency staff.

A lot of staff were employed to cleanse data, but there was a certain amount of data that was wrong.

Urbaser had the right levels of staff since day one of the contract, however a number of those had been agency staff.

In-cab technology was the way that crews would identify bins for collection in future, but putting the house number on the bins was the simplest way for staff to identify which bins to collect. High tech solutions would delay collections.

There was not a fundamental fault with the service and the teams were currently in a rolling recovery phase.

The Service Manager- Waste and Recycling advised that, in respect of payments, Urbaser collected the payments, although the money came straight to NHDC and the contract with the customer was with NHDC.

The payment system was now fully functional with a fully functioning API transfer system to the waste collection system.

There had only been 6 months to mobilise the service, which was not long enough.

Next year, in respect of payments, they would focus on existing users, who would get a direct communication that payment was due and there would be some marketing, although not direct communication with residents who had not yet signed up for the service.

The Chairman advised that the subject of next year would be one of the issues answered at a later date.

Members noted that two major issues had been staff not turning up for work and the vehicles not being delivered, compounded by the hiring of vehicles that were not up to the task. They queried why these issues could not have been foreseen and contingencies put in place.

The Service Manager – Waste and Recycling advised that the contingency for the purchased vehicles was the hire fleet. The problem with the hire fleet was that a lot of vehicles had been sent to landfill, where they received damage to the mud flaps and wheel arches and it was illegal to travel on the road without these.

In respect of staff, TUPE transfers were always difficult, but they had held training days, which had been the last day to determine who would turn up for work, They also needed additional staff to manage the additional rounds.

Councillor Weeks advised that they were under the impression that the vehicles, which had been ordered, would arrive on time, but that did not happen.

Members commented that a key issue was the communication, mainly with the residents. In future it was important that communications go out via different methods that were likely to reach most people.

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Members queried whether sufficient caddies had been ordered and what steps could be taken to ensure that calls made by residents were answered.

Councillor Weeks advised that the correct number of caddies had been ordered, but a smaller number had been delivered. The manufacturer had admitted this mistake and would be delivering the missing caddies.

They were unable to order more caddies initially, as there was no where to store them. In future caddies would be ordered jointly with East Herts to ensure value for money.

Members commented that previous custom and practice had enabled staff to leave earlier than their contracted finish time and queried why it had not been predicted that staff would be upset by having to work longer hours and possibly not turn up to work.

The Service Manager – Waste and Recycling advised that there had been no changes to terms and conditions for staff and that there was ongoing discussion between management and trade unions regarding collection routes and working hours.

Staff may be upset at round changes, but staff were expected to work their contracted hours.

It should be noted that the majority of staff were on the same rounds, doing the same job. There were some staff doing different jobs.

Members queried whether calls regarding missed bins were directed to Urbaser or NHDC and asked when the service would be within acceptable tolerances.

The Service Manager - Waste and Recycling advised that the system was provided by Urbaser, but NHDC had full access. The service should be running as "business as usual" by the beginning of August 2018.

Members commented that this had made people less tolerant of missed bins and queried whether people were reporting the same bin missed multiple times because the agreed collection dates were not being met.

The Service Manager – Waste and Recycling accepted that people would be more sensitive to this issue in future, however they would be looking at performance levels.

There had been a number of cases of multiple calls regarding the same bin and this could be due to overpromising regarding collection dates. Maybe communication regarding collection times should be made to residents.

She had spoken to Urbaser who had reassured her that the majority of missed bins were being collected with 48 hours.

They had tried to provide as many rectifications as possible and would be looking at why some rectifications had not happened.

Because of delays in reporting, missed bins were not seen as a problem until day 3 by which time there were a lot of missed bins.

Councillor Weeks thanked everyone who had helped the Waste Team, who had been under serious pressure.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Weeks and the Service Manager - Waste and Recycling for attending the meeting and commented that she had been reassured that the problems were being managed and that it was now just a matter of time before the service was operating normally.

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Note: Please find below a list of questions asked during this item, that have either been answered during the debate, may be answered at the meeting due to be held on 18 September 2018 or may form the basis of a Task and Finish Group regarding the Implementation of the new Waste Contract:

- Why did the Council not spot earlier that the process of paying for brown bin services was not operating effectively?
- Given that there was a known risk of Veolia employees not transferring to Urbaser, what steps had the Council taken to ensure that significant local knowledge had been captured should this risk materialise and operatives no longer turn up for work?
- What arrangements were in place to ensure that those who did not get the brown bin information leaflet were able to avail themselves of the early bird rate for brown bin collection?
- Does the Council know how many properties did not receive the initial information leaflet regarding brown bin collection changes?
- What arrangements are in place to ensure that special collection services, such as batteries and textiles, would operate effectively going forward as there was evidence that this was not initially done?
- Does the Council know what length of time individuals needed to wait to have their food caddy and/or bin emptied? There was evidence that some households waited a number of weeks.
- What might the Council do in response to complaints that payments were made for a brown bin collection service that was not delivered as advertised in the initial month?
- Could consideration be given to putting back the start of the 2019/20 payment period by perhaps a month to reflect this delay?
- Could NHDC learn anything from the way EHDC managed the mobilisation of the new contract?
- Should and how might the Council have been more hands on in managing the transition from Veolia to Urbaser?
- Are staffing levels at the required level and are these staff permanent?
- Is the Council looking to have a more high-tech way (than residents numbering their bin) of identifying properties that had bought into the brown bin service?
- Was there a formal, documented recovery plan in place to get the contract to delivery of the expected service?
- What is the Council going to do to ensure that going forwards there were robust payment collection methods in place?
- Would there be marketing to advertise the brown bin service to those residents who had not yet signed up?
- A significant issue was that vehicles were not available on day one. Why was there no contingency plan to cover this?
- A significant issue was that staff did not turn up on day one and beyond. How did the Council not predict this and consequently not know until after the event?
- There was a significant issue with communication to the public. Can the Council ensure that effective methods of communication using as wide a range of methods as possible are used to reach the maximum number of residents when future communications are required?
- Did the Council order the right number of food caddies and were there enough to cover replacements and provision of service to new properties?
- What steps can the Council take to mitigate the blocking of the Council's and Urbaser's switchboards in the immediate future and in the longer term?
- Given that there has been a change in custom and practice ways of working, could the Council not have reasonably expected staff to leave?
- When the Council tendered for work, where was the tipping point between efficiencies needed and the contractor negatively impacting on terms and conditions of staff?
- When customers logged missed bins, where were they logged?

- When would the service stabilise and collection be within normal tolerances?
- What was being done to ensure that individuals' expectations were met in the future?
- What percentage of issues experienced was related to rectification?

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Executive Member for Waste and Recycling and Environment and the Service Manager-Waste and Recycling be requested to attend the meeting of this Committee, due to be held on 18 September 2018 to report on the issues and problems faced following the implementation of the new waste and recycling contract in more detail;
- (2) That those questions from Members, unable to be immediately responded to, be recorded and, if possible, answered by the Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment and the Service Manager – Waste and Recycling as part of the presentation mentioned in (1) above;
- (3) That the Controls, Performance and Risk Manager be requested to report on performance indicators relating to waste and recycling in as much detail as possible in all quarterly reports for the foreseeable future;
- (4) That the Scrutiny Officer be requested to take note of the list of questions above, so that they can be used as a basis for either the presentation on 18 September 2018 (see (1) above), and/or a Task and Finish Group on the Implementation of the New Waste Contract.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the issues and problems faced following the implementation of the new waste and recycling contract.

9 YEAR END PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2017/18

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report entitled Year End Performance Indicators 2017/18 and drew attention to the following:

Performance Indicator Setting and Monitoring

Members queried why some of the indicators did not have a target and who was responsible for setting targets.

The Controls Risk and Performance Manager advised that the Indicators without targets were generally related to homelessness and these were included for information only.

Targets were reviewed and set annually as part of the Corporate Planning process by the Heads of Service together with the relevant Executive Members.

The new Performance Indicators were then approved by Cabinet and reviewed by this Committee.

Benchmarking

Members asked that wherever possible benchmarking information be included in future reports.

BV12 – Working Days Lost due to Sickness Absence per FTE employee

Members asked for clarification regarding how this figure was calculated.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that this was an average of the number of days lost per full time employee.

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The Chief Executive advised that BV12 showed the overall levels of sickness absence. BV12a and BV12b showed the breakdown between long term and short term absence. The figure at BV12 was below the median of that of other Local Authorities.

Members noted that a high proportion of staff now worked at home and queried how it was determined whether they were sick or working.

The Chief Executive informed Members that if staff were sick they were required to contact their Manager. There was also the ability to check productivity details and review performance against objectives.

NI192 – Percentage of Household Waste sent for reuse, recycling and Composting

Members noted that NHDC was 7th out of 51 and commented that this demonstrated that NHDC was doing well and the residents were actively recycling.

LI037 – Percentage of Customers satisfied with the Services Provided by Housing and Public Protection Service

Members commented that this indicator was showing as red, but the commentary stated that high levels of satisfaction were still shown.

They expressed concern that targets and tolerances may not have been scrutinised effectively.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that levels were taken very seriously. The target was missed by a small margin although they retained high levels of satisfaction.

Investors in People

Members noted that NHDC was an Investors in People organisation and queried when the next re-registration for this was due.

The Chief Executive advised that NHDC had been IIP certified for about 14 years and was reaccredited in 2017 with an interim review due in approximately 9 months.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the year end 2017/18 Performance Indicators be noted;
- (2) That, where benchmark information is available, this be included in future reports regarding Performance Indicators;

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the Year End Performance Indicator Monitoring Report.

10 YEAR END KEY PROJECTS 2017/18

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report entitled Year End Key Projects 2017/18 and drew attention to the following:

Office Accommodation

The final Project Board meeting was held on 11 June 2018 and this project was in the process of being signed off and the having the lessons learned recorded.

Churchgate

A Member queried why the proposed Churchgate project had not been included in this report

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that Churchgate had been removed from the 2017/18 report as the project had ceased in that year, however it would appear the 2018/19 project report, as it was part of the Corporate Plan for 2018/19.

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The Chief Executive advised that the previous project had ceased, following Council's decision not to extend the contract with Simmons. There was a potential project being worked on, but there would be no formal project until Council had decided whether or not to proceed.

Waste Contract

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that the commentary regarding the Waste Contract would be updated in the next report.

Hitchin Town Hall Community Facility and Museum

Members expressed concern that the Hitchin Town Hall and Museum project was marked as amber, yet was some way from being fully open and queried when the comments regarding this were written.

Crematorium

Members expressed concern that there did not appear to be any future targets following the submission of the planning application.

Improve use of Council Assets

Members noted that it was proposed that a property company be set up, but expressed concern that there were no future targets following this.

Reporting Dates and Traffic Light System

Members noted that the dates of the commentary varied throughout the report and asked for clarification.

A Member queried whether the traffic light system was fit for purpose as they did not seem to fit with the actual position for any project

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that the report was circulated approximately one month prior to the meeting therefore the commentary was the most recent position at that point.

In respect of the traffic light system, a review of how performance was monitored would take place in the near future and this would form part of that review.

Reporting on Long Term Projects

Members noted that reporting regarding the long term project, which crossed over more than one year, only mentioned the target for the current year. They felt that the targets for each year up to completion should at least be noted, even though reporting would only be against the current year's target.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that milestones that had not been completed in year, would be carried forward and continue to be reported in the following reporting year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That delivery against the key projects for 2017/18 be noted;
- (2) That the proposed review regarding the method of reporting consider the following:
 - (i) That commentaries include the date at which that information was gathered;
 - (ii) Whether the traffic light system should be used, or replaced with a more effective flagging system;
 - (iii) That all targets up to completion of a project be included in the reports, even if the project is expected to span several years.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the Year End Monitoring Report on Key Projects for 2017-18.

11 PRESENTATION BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Lynda Needham, Leader of the Council, thanked the Chairman for the invitation to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation as follows:

Waste Contract

The Leader of the Council commented that, even though a charge was now being made for the collection of garden waste, the Council continued to heavily subsidise this service.

A Review of the Previous Year

The Leader of the Council advised that it had been a very busy year.

The waste contract had been one of the most significant service changes/new contracts that the Council had implemented. In addition to this it was easy to forget that we had also managed the integration of the waste teams of this Council and East Herts Council. We were the first of the Authorities in Hertfordshire to embark on this and have engaged with Hertfordshire County Council's Scrutiny work programme as an exemplar of how Councils can work more effectively together.

The Office Accommodation Project had been an excellent example of project management and delivery. The project was delivered on time and within budget tolerances (£23k overspend and the final capital budget was £6.1M).

The Refurbishment works to the Letchworth Leisure Centre had been completed, which again was an excellent project that, despite some financial challenges in delivering a project at a reasonable cost, had demonstrated excellent outcomes with a new learner pool and totally refurbished facilities including: sports hall, lighting, flooring, additional studio, new café and boiler refurbishment.

Finally, the Local Plan was adopted by Council for submission to the Secretary of State. The Examination process was extensive to say the least, with the Inspector starting off with a 5 week timetable finishing before Christmas, but this soon changed and the Examination concluded in March after many hours of representations and lots of 'homework'. We are expecting the Inspectors modifications in the summer and there will need to be further consultation by the Inspector on them.

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank the Planning Team, who had gone above and beyond the call of duty, working very long and unsociable hours.

A Summary of the Coming Year

The Leader of the Council advised that most of the information regarding the coming year was included the Corporate Plan, which Members would all be familiar with and drew attention to the following:

- Local Plan
Got to get through the modifications and on to consultation, adoption and implementation;
- Crematorium
The Council would be moving forward with the crematorium project, now that the planning applications had been submitted;
- Waste Contract
Ensure that the Waste Contract was embedded and running smoothly;

- Museum
The Town Hall had been open, running effectively and earning income for over two years. It was now important to get a resolution to the ownership of the entrance thereby allowing the full opening of the Museum;
- BIDS
Work with our BIDs to ensure that the re-ballots are undertaken effectively. The Council undertook the re-balloting process at no cost to the BIDS as part of the Council's financial contribution to them.
- Careline
Continue to develop our Careline operation with our private clients, Herts County Council and corporate clients looking at new deployment opportunities. Technology was enabling people to remain in their own homes for longer and Careline was service supporting this.

The Leader of the Council recommended that Members arrange to visit the Careline Manager, who would explain upcoming technologies and their uses.
- Commercial Service Delivery
Develop our commercial approach to service delivery;
- Churchgate
Ascertain what options exist for Churchgate and the market area of Hitchin.

What Went Well

- Office Accommodation
There was a huge amount of commitment from all parties including staff, project team, contractors and Councillors;
- North Herts Leisure Centre
This was well organised in order to minimise disruption whilst delivering a project of significant complexity;
- Shared Service Waste Team
This was brought forward from the original proposal of mid 2019 to late 2017. This was to ensure that new shared team was in place for start of the contract.
- Elections
Administrative arrangements for the snap General Election, which was called whilst we were in the run up to the County elections.

The administrative complexity of running two elections on different timetables with huge resource pressures went well.

What needs to be improved Upon

The Leader of the Council stated that, in her view, you can always improve and it was important to recognise that identifying improvements was not an implied criticism and drew attention to the following areas

- Being ambitious whilst recognising resource constraints and being realistic about what we could deliver. Sometimes our enthusiasm exceeded our ability to deliver.
- Communication could always be improved upon and that relates to everyone associated with the organisation including officers, Councillors, residents and partners.

- Having a common purpose. Once a decision was made, acting on it for the good of the Council and the residents of the District.
- Having the ability to think longer term and strategically. There would be increasingly difficult decisions to take in the future and that would take a shift in mind-set.

Members asked for an update regarding the Hitchin Town Hall and queried why an interim arrangement had not been made.

In respect of the interim deal, there was a privately arranged public meeting in Hitchin, at which it was mentioned that an interim deal regarding access was being offered to the Council. This offer was not made to the Council, but it was looked into. The deal offered related to disabled people and not the general public and the other party wanted this arrangement to be under licence. The options were to stop the negotiations already taking place in order to negotiate a licence or to continue with the negotiations already in hand. It was decided that it was more expedient to continue the existing negotiations.

In spring 2017 an amount of money had been agreed for the purchase of 1415 Brand Street and the Council understood that a deal regarding this was agreed and was ready to sign. Following a Board meeting of the other party, the negotiating team changed and 10 additional clauses were submitted. The Council had considered each of these clauses, seven were now agreed on, two were close to resolution and one needed more negotiation.

This process had so far taken 19 months.

Members commented that it was a matter of some urgency that the Council push forward with the commercialisation agenda and asked about the appointment of the senior person to take this forward. They noted that the SIAS report recommended some cross party working to take this forward and asked whether this would be supported.

The Leader of the Council agreed that the commercialisation agenda was urgent. In respect of cross party working, she would look at how this could be introduced.

Members expressed concern at the comments made regarding the brown bin service being heavily subsidised, as they were under the impression, from papers presented to Cabinet, and considered by this Committee, that the service would provide a significant profit.

The Leader of the Council did not recollect any papers that talked about profit in relation to brown bin collections. However she would take this away and clarify the position.

She confirmed that the aim was for the service to become self-funding and, if it became profit making, a debate would be held as to what any surplus fund would be used for.

Members referred to the Gender Pay Gap, they noted that NHDC had fared particularly poorly against other Local Authorities in this area and asked what actions would be taken to reduce the gap.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Gender Pay Gap was particularly low, mainly due to the number of outside contracts that were mainly staffed by male employees, resulting in the ratio of female employees employed directly by the Council being particularly high. Local Authorities were very generous with flexible working including the ability to work from home and flexible hours, which appealed particularly to young females.

The Council needed to encourage female workers to apply for any internal promotions as well as senior positions.

The most recent senior appointment was for the Deputy Chief Executive, the short listed people for this was four females and two males.

Female employees should be encouraged to request training, which would support them in applying for more senior roles.

A Member commented that it was important for NHDC to encourage females to apply for senior roles, but also to support their needs and queried whether there was a plan in place to address these issues.

The Leader of the Council advised that there was not a specific plan in place, however NHDC had always offered training and support to all staff. Any further plans and actions would be for the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) to produce and implement.

In terms of pay scales, which was a different issues to that of the Gender Pay Gap, the Council had one pay scale that applied to everyone and there was no pay inequality.

The Chief Executive advised that further work was be undertaken through coaching and mentoring as well as the opportunities in regular performance reviews and professional development and these actions were underpinned by the People Strategy and the Workforce Development Plan.

In response to a question, he advised that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken regarding coaching training and this continued.

A Member noted that an area identified in previous years for potential savings had been the abolition of Area Committees and sought assurance that Area Committees, together with their grant making powers would not be abolished.

The Leader of the Council reminded Members that there would be increasingly difficult financial decisions to be made in the future, particularly if the Government continued to increase the negative grant for NHDC. As funding was reduced, so the amount available for grant funding had reduced, and it was possible that grant funding would no longer be available in the future.

In respect of Area Committees, she could not give any guarentees that these would continue in perpetuity. NHDC had maintained the Area Committees so far and were the only authority in Hertfordshire to do so.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Leader of the Council be thanked for her presentation;
- (2) That the Chief Executive be requested to investigate the queries regarding the finances surrounding the brown bin collection service and report back to Members of this Committee.

12 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT

RESOLVED: That the report entitled Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act – Quarterly Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with best practice guidance and the Committee's terms of reference.

13 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Stears-Handscomb confirmed that he had agreed for the question he posed on 20 March 2018 to be responded to at the meeting due to be held on 18 September 2018.

No further questions had been asked.

RESOLVED: That it be noted that Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb had agreed that the answer to his question, asked at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 March 2017, be responded to at the meeting due to be held on 18 September 2018.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that questions from Members are responded to in a timely manner.

14 RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chief Executive presented the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Minute 50 – September 2015 – Task and Finish Group on the Commercialisation of Council Services

Members noted that the Service Director – Commercial had been tasked with developing a commercialism strategy and queried whether there was a timescale for this to be completed.

The Chief Executive advised that the Service Director - Commercial took up the post on 1 June 2018 and one of the first objectives was to set a timescale for this.

Members agreed that the new Service Director – Commercial should be requested to make a presentation to this Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actions resulting from the resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (2) That the Service Director – Commercial be invited to attend the meeting of this Committee due to be held on 18 September 2018, to discuss future plans for commercialisation and how the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on Commercialisation may be implemented.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and monitor the progress of resolutions made.

15 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19

The Chief Executive presented the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and drew attention to the following:

Member Workshop on Scrutiny

The Chief Executive drew attention to Paragraph 5.2 of the report which referenced the planned workshop.

The Scrutiny Officer was in dialogue with the Office of Public Scrutiny to draw together a programme for this workshop

Part of effective scrutiny was being able to present recommendations in a way that was acceptable and achievable.

Tuesday, 12th June, 2018

Members commented that it was important that there was dialogue between this Committee and Cabinet to find a way to ensure that the best possible outcomes were achieved from recommendations made by this Committee.

Lessons Learnt Log

Members commented that this needed updating.

Members discussed that it would be valuable for this Committee to meet with Heads of Service to see how the lessons learnt log was used.

Task and Finish Groups

Several subjects were awaiting scheduling as follows:

Consultation and Engagement	Waste Contract
Review of MOU Grants	Review of Hitchin Town Hall
Parking Strategy	Commercialisation Strategy
Effectiveness of the Community Halls Strategy	

Members considered that there should be a Task and Finish Group on Communication and Communication in a Crisis and that the proposed Waste contract Task and Finish Group be retitled as Implementation of the New Waste Contract.

The Chief Executive advised that basing detail gathered for Task and Finish Group investigations around specific projects was sometimes unhelpful, rather a schematic view that was more useful.

It was important to have an overview of how events and tasks were managed and try to draw out key learning points that could be applied to a specific project or more widely.

The proposed Task and Finish Group on Consultation and Engagement was based on the Council's Consultation Strategy and this was an area that would benefit from an overview and that Business Continuity elements should be considered at this time.

Members considered that a draft scope should be prepared for a Task and Finish Group on the Implementation of the new Waste Contract and that a small group of Members be tasked with preparing the scope outside of the meeting. It was agreed that Councillor Weeks be invited to help with this task.

Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Steve Deakin-Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Jean Green and Janine Paterson volunteered to undertake this task.

Forward Plan

Members considered that the following items listed on the Forward Plan should be considered by this Committee:

Local Plan Modifications
Approach to Developer Contributions in North Hertfordshire
Corporate Enforcement Policy

Work Programme

Members commented that not all decisions appeared on the Forward Plan and that any project regarding Churchgate should be considered by this Committee.

The Chief Executive advised that any decision regarding Churchgate would be considered by full Council.

Members queried whether this Committee could consider reports due to be considered by Council.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted;
- (2) That the following be added to the list of potential Task and Finish Groups/Reviews:
 - Communication and Communication in a crisis;
 - Implementation of the new waste and recycling contract;
- (3) That Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Steve Deakin-Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Jean Green and Janine Paterson be requested to meet at 6.30pm on 24 July 2018 in order to draw up a draft scope for a review of the Implementation of the new waste and recycling contract and that Councillor Weeks be invited to help with this task;
- (4) That, in addition to the list of proposed items for consideration at the meeting due to be held on 24 July 2018, the following also be considered:
 - Whether Items due to be considered by Council could be considered by this Committee;
 - Draft scope for a review of the implementation of the new waste and recycling contract.
- (5) That the following be added to the list of Items to be scheduled for future meetings:
 - Local Plan Modifications
 - Approach to Developer Contributions in North Hertfordshire
 - Corporate Enforcement Policy

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to plan and carry out its workload efficiently and effectively.

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm

Chairman