
REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2003

Chair: * Councillor Jean Lammiman

Councillors: * Blann * Marie-Louise Nolan
 * Mitzi Green * Osborn
 * Ann Groves * Pinkus
 * Ingram * Thammaiah
 * Myra Michael (1) * Versallion

* Denotes Member present
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillor C Mote also attended this meeting in a participating role].

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION I - Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2002/03

Your Committee was reminded of the requirements, as set out under Article 6 and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 12.3 of the Constitution, to report annually to full Council on its workings over the past year and on its agreed outline work programme for the current Municipal Year.

The former Chair of the Committee, Councillor Chris Mote, was in attendance at the meeting and presented the Committee's annual report for 2002/03, which incorporated the outline work programme for 2003/04.

Councillor Mote stated that, as last year had been the first year of operation of the new arrangements for the scrutiny function, a slow and measured approach had been taken. The scrutiny bodies had piloted a variety of ways of carrying out review work, and many lessons had been learnt, not least that review work was very resource-intensive in terms of Member and officer time. Future reviews would need to be well planned in order to make the best use of scrutiny's limited resources. With regard to the future development of scrutiny in Harrow, Councillor Mote stated that he would like to see further development of the policy development role and, although the staffing issue was being addressed, more resources dedicated to scrutiny. He thanked the Chairs of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees, and also the staff supporting scrutiny, for all their hard work during 2002/03.

Members felt that there was still a need for additional research and administrative support for scrutiny. Councillor Mote suggested that there was also a need for increased funding to buy in external support. It was advised that the need for increased support to undertake research would be addressed by the recruitment of the additional scrutiny support officer, which was on-going, but there was also capacity in the budget this year for a part-time administrative post. However, this would currently be only on a temporary basis. Members confirmed that officers should proceed with arranging this support.

With regard to research, it was suggested that the Council should be more outward-looking and learn lessons from other Authorities. Councillor Mote stated that the IDeA website was collating scrutiny reviews from Authorities across the country, and felt that this would eventually be a valuable resource. Officers were asked to ensure that the reports of the Committee's reviews were also placed on the IDeA website.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

That the Committee's annual report for 2002/03 and the outline work programme for 2003/04 contained therein, as now reported in accordance with Article 6 and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 12.3 of the Constitution, be noted.

PART II - MINUTES

79.

Attendance by Reserve Members:

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member
Councillor Seymour

Reserve Member
Councillor Myra Michael

80. **Declarations of Interest:**

Councillor Ann Groves declared a non-prejudicial interest, by virtue of being a Magistrate serving on the Harrow Bench, in agenda item 13, "Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2002/03", in that the report of the Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee referred to the proposed closure of Harrow Magistrates Court.

RESOLVED: To note the declaration of interest made by Councillor Ann Groves in respect of agenda item 13, and that she participated in the discussion and the decision thereon.

81. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) agenda items 11 and 12(a), on which the Leader and the Chief Executive were to be questioned, be considered together after agenda item 8;

(2) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following item be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
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12(b) Review of the South Harrow Pilot Scheme	The Scrutiny Review Group did not meet to finalise their findings until 2 July 2003, subsequent to the dispatch of the agenda. The report needs to be considered and approved by the Committee prior to this issue being considered and a decision on the roll-out of the pilot to Areas 2 and 3 being taken at the Cabinet meeting on 15 July 2003.
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(3) all items be taken with the press and public present.

82. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 1 April 2003, and of the Special meeting held on 15 May 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as correct records.

83. **Public Questions/Petitions/Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put or petitions or deputations received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 8, 9 and 10 respectively.

84. **Improvement Plan for IDeA Review and Comprehensive Performance Assessment:**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director (Organisational Development), which set out the Council's Improvement Plan in response to the Improvement and Development Agency's review and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The report summarised the main messages for Harrow and how the Authority intended to address the issues raised.

In response to a question from the Chair, additional information was provided on the rationale behind the identification of the priority areas. There was also concern about silo working, and it was advised that the work being done to implement the Improvement Plan and the New Harrow Project was designed to break this down.

The Committee then questioned the Leader and the Chief Executive on both the CPA/IDeA Improvement Plan and the New Harrow Project. The notes of the question and answer session are at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: To note (1) the updated Improvement Plan as a working draft;

(2) that quarterly progress reports would be made to the Committee on each of the key priority areas, starting in September 2003.

85. **The New Harrow Project:**

In addition to questioning the Leader and the Chief Executive on the New Harrow

Project and the CPA/IDeA Improvement Plan (see Minute 84 above and Appendix 1) the Committee received and endorsed the report of the Review Group on the New Harrow Project South Harrow Pilot.

It was agreed that all Members of the Review Group should continue to serve on the Review Group which would now go on to review the NHP as a whole, with the addition of Councillor Osborn.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report of the review of the New Harrow Project South Harrow Pilot be noted and endorsed; and

(2) Councillors Blann, Mitzi Green, Ann Groves, Jean Lammiman, Osborn and Versallion be appointed to serve on the review group to carry out the review of the New Harrow Project as a whole.

86.

External Auditors' Audit Plan:

Members considered the Audit Plan of the Council's new External Auditors, Deloitte and Touche.

The Chair welcomed Nigel Johnson and Angus Fish of Deloitte and Touche, who were in attendance, to the meeting. Mr Johnson introduced the Audit Plan, and outlined the process for its development.

Members were interested to find out the new auditors' feel for Harrow. Mr Johnson advised that his initial impressions were of a Council which had recognised that it had got into a stage of under-performing, and was energetically making changes and making plans to change. It was difficult, however, to pinpoint specific differences with other Authorities as Deloitte and Touche had not yet completed any significant pieces of work for Harrow.

The increase in the audit fee compared with last year was noted and in light of this, the way in which Deloitte and Touche's Audit Plan differed from that of the Council's previous external auditors was questioned. Mr Johnson felt that the current Audit Plan took a more rounded view, but only because it had been developed with the benefit of the CPA report; this had enabled areas of work to be developed which otherwise might not have been. The make-up of the audit fee was set out in the Plan. The increase in the audit fee was largely inflationary but included charges for additional work relating to the MTBS and the monitoring and testing of Improvement Plans.

Members were concerned that they should be able to assess the quality of the service provided by Deloitte and Touche, and queried how they should judge this. Mr Johnson suggested that Deloitte and Touche should be judged on the delivery of their audit plan, the quality of the reports produced, the degree of management buy-in to reports, and staying within budget.

In response to further questions, Mr Johnson outlined the role of the Relationship Manager, and advised that, with regard to the staffing of internal audit, he and his colleagues would be better placed to judge whether it was adequately resourced by the end of the year.

It was noted that as part of their work on corporate governance, Deloitte and Touche would be reviewing the operation of scrutiny, and Members were keen to be consulted. Mr Johnson advised that this was part of a piece of work which would look at how Member structures were working, and which would be carried out towards the end of the calendar year. Consideration had not yet been given to the way in which Members would be consulted, as the scope of that piece of work had not yet been developed, but Members' desire to be consulted had been noted.

The Chair thanked Mr Johnson and Mr Fish for coming. Mr Johnson thanked the Committee for inviting them, and advised that they valued the opportunity to attend.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Plan be noted.

87.

Audit and Consultancy Services - 2002/03 Annual Audit Report and 2003/04 Audit Plan:

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Internal Auditor which set out the performance of Audit and Consultancy Services (ACS) and the findings arising from their work in 2002/03, and a work plan for 2003/04.

The proposed reviews of local/departmental financial systems were noted, and at the

request of Members, the Chief Internal Auditor undertook to place reports of relevant reviews, once produced, onto the Information Circulars of the Health and Social Care and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

In response to Members' questions, it was advised that Internal Audit work on BVPIs and financial management systems would be done as two separate projects as performance management and financial management systems were not currently integrated. However, as new arrangements were put in place to integrate these systems Internal Audit would review whether work should be done on this as part of future audit plans. It was also advised that, in relation to business continuity planning, good preventative measures were in place, but there were gaps in the Authority's arrangements for back-up and recovery of its business critical systems. The chances of these systems failing were therefore minimised, but if they did the implications would be substantial. Work to address this issue had awaited the appointment of the new IT manager, and if it was to be done comprehensively it was unlikely the report scheduled for the end of the calendar year could be produced any earlier, but the new IT manager was now in post and this work was being taken forward. Internal Audit would also be considering how they could inform the development of the IT strategy.

RESOLVED: That the 2002/03 year end report and the 2003/04 audit plan be noted.

88. **Extensions of the Meeting:**

At 9.56 pm, during discussion of the above item, and subsequently at 10.12 pm, during discussion of the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2002/03, the Chair drew the attention of the meeting to the time.

RESOLVED: That, under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6.7(ii)(b), the meeting be extended to 10.15 pm and 10.30 pm respectively.

89. **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2002/03:**

See Recommendation I.

90. **Annual Audit Letter 2001/02 - Progress:**

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Business Connections) which outlined progress made against agreed actions arising from the Annual Audit Letter 2001/02.

The Executive Director (Business Connections) reported that much progress had been made against the action plan and in other improvements in the financial management of the Authority, some of which had been referred to the Internal Audit report. In particular, there had been significant improvements in budget monitoring during the past six to nine months and this was now far more robust. A key issue would be maintaining the momentum of the improvements made, in order that they were sustained and built upon.

RESOLVED: That the report, and the progress made, be noted.

91. **Annual Audit Letter 2001/02 - Best Value Performance Plan Audit - Update:**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive which set out progress made against the Action Plan agreed in response to the Best Value Performance Plan Audit.

It was advised that all the actions had been implemented in the course of data collection for the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2003/04. The effectiveness of the steps taken to ensure the validity of the data included in the BVPP would be judged in two ways: via a review being carried out by an internal team, and via the audit by the Council's External Auditors of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) as part of the overall audit of the BVPP.

Members noted that scrutiny had so far taken a 'light touch' approach to the examination of the BVPP, and there was a need to consider scrutiny's role in the development of the BVPP and also in the monitoring and use of performance information. In particular, there was a need to determine the extent to which the scrutiny review of budget processes would consider the use of BVPIs, and the way in which BVPIs could most usefully be presented to and used by the scrutiny bodies. With regard to the latter issue, a Member suggested that the Scrutiny Sub-Committees should receive a full report on this, and should give consideration to exception reporting.

The Executive Director (Organisational Development) advised that the Council was currently looking at this issue and was in the process of developing a 'traffic light system' for reporting BVPIs. She suggested that she meet with the Chairs of the scrutiny bodies to brief them on the system and discuss ways in which performance

information could best be presented to the scrutiny bodies. This was agreed. In the meantime, it was agreed that a Member would do some work on apportioning BVPIs to the scrutiny bodies.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Executive Director (Organisational Development) meet with the Chairs of the scrutiny bodies, to brief them on the system being developed for the reporting of BVPIs, and to discuss the ways in which performance information could most usefully be presented to scrutiny bodies; and

(2) the report be noted.

92. **Progress Reports on Reviews - Members' Verbal Updates:**

It was noted that there was a need to appoint a Lead Member for the scrutiny review of budget processes and it was suggested that Councillor Ingram be appointed to this role. The membership of the Review Group for this review would be drawn from Councillors Blann, Choudhury, Currie, Ingram, Jean Lammiman, Myra Michael and Versallion. It had also been agreed that two co-optees would serve on this Review Group.

With regard to the scrutiny review of Housing Benefits, it was suggested that Councillor Thammaiah be added to the membership of the Review Group. It was noted that Councillor Ingram had been acting as the Lead Member for the review. It was suggested that Councillor Thammaiah now be appointed to this role.

There was a need to consider the timing of the scrutiny review of budget processes and the second stage of the review of the New Harrow Project. A Member stated that the aims of the review of budget processes were not specifically to influence the way in which the budget was formulated this year but to review systems overall and make recommendations for the longer term; he therefore suggested that the review of the NHP could be undertaken first. This was agreed.

RESOLVED: That (1) Councillor Thammaiah be appointed as a member of the Review Group on Housing Benefits;

(2) Councillors Ingram, Jean Lammiman and Thammaiah be appointed the Lead Members for the reviews of budget processes, the New Harrow Project and Housing Benefits respectively;

(3) the second stage of the review of the NHP be conducted before the review of budget processes be commenced.

93. **Changes in Sub-Committee Memberships:**

RESOLVED: That the changes in the Labour Group memberships of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees, as set out at Appendix 2, be noted.

94. **Scrutiny Training:**

Having raised this as an item of Any Other Business, the Chair advised that the Council had been offered some training for Members on scrutiny, and that she and the Vice Chair would be looking at this to ensure that it was appropriate before taking up the offer.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.30 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JEAN LAMMIMAN
Chair

APPENDIX 1**NOTES OF THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE LEADER AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE IDeA/CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND THE NEW HARROW PROJECT (Minutes 84 and 85)**

In response to questions from the Chair, the Leader and Chief Executive began by identifying performance indicators which would be used to evaluate the New Harrow Project (NHP), and the costs of the restructuring.

The Leader outlined a number of high-level indicators. The over-arching indicator would be the CPA judgement: the objective was to receive a 'good' rating by 2006. Another key indicator would be future Council Tax levels: one of the indicators for the NHP was the implementation of a Medium Term Budget Strategy (MTBS) which would result in an inflation-only or lower rise in Council Tax by 2006. The Leader added that the performance of the current administration at the next elections would also be an indicator of the success of the NHP.

The Chief Executive advised that there were four components to the NHP: the rebuilding of budgetary systems and the removal of reliance on one-off funding sources; the pilot scheme, its review and roll-out; the managerial changes and restructuring, the timetable for which was set out in the CPA Improvement Plan; and the development of an IT strategy and responding in part to the Scrutiny Review of e-Government.

She confirmed that at the highest level, the key performance indicator would be the refreshment of the CPA rating, but identified a number of other indicators which would be used to evaluate the NHP. A series of inspections before the refreshment of the CPA rating would give an indication of the direction of travel. The implementation of the CPA Improvement Plan was being monitored, and the review of the first quarter's progress would be circulated to Members shortly. Project management plans for changes would ensure that they were managed, and progress monitored, at a micro-level. There were also other informal indicators emerging, such as the positive effect which the pilot scheme had had on reducing the fear of crime in South Harrow, and this had been commented upon by the Audit Commission.

With regard to costs, the Leader stated that the costs of the top-level re-organisation had been agreed by the Cabinet in July 2002. Transitional costs of around £1m had been identified, which comprised of redundancy and other costs. It was difficult to say yet what the exact cost would be as the transition had not yet been completed, but revenue allocations for all one-off costs had been reported to Cabinet and taken into account in the MTBS. He added that he would be surprised if they came under pressure.

The Chief Executive advised that Appendix 1 to the CPA Improvement Plan set out the budget to implement the management changes, and this was approximately £900,000. A further £1.4m had been allocated, over and above the costs referred to by the Leader, of which £0.5m had been put back into Reserves but could be made available again if needed. The actual cost of the changes in comparison with the agreed budgets would be reviewed by the end of August and reported to Cabinet. It was hoped this would be reported in September, but it was dependent upon completing the round of appointments.

Reference was made to the emphasis placed by the Audit Commission on the need to implement higher public realm maintenance standards across the whole of the Borough, and the way in which this would be reconciled with the roll-out was queried. The Chief Executive advised that there were a number of issues relating to standards. There were several contracts, for example for grounds maintenance, already in place across the Borough, and these needed to be examined to see if they were enforcing the necessary standards. In this regard, the Audit Commission had also commented that one of the keys to the roll-out of the pilot had been the flexibility of the in-house team. Funding had been built into the budget this year for an interim increase in standards, primarily in shopping areas, over and above the current and contract standards. In addition, the Cabinet would consider a New Harrow Project Panel recommendation regarding the roll-out at its meeting on 15 July 2003. With regard to the roll-out, the Leader added that there had been concern that resources would be transferred away from the initial areas, but that would not be the case: additional resources were being put in to level up standards across the borough, and that would continue.

In response to further questions, the Leader and the Chief Executive explained the way in which the NHP had been developed, and outlined steps taken to avoid destabilising the organisation. The Leader stated that discussions on the restructuring dated back to the time of the arrival of the Chief Executive and his appointment as Leader. There had been agreement almost immediately on an agenda arising from an awareness of the problems faced by the Council, such as the prevalence of silo working, and a consensus on the need to integrate Education and Social Services and to develop a more devolved and more effective model for service delivery. With regard to maintaining stability, there had been concern about this, and in Social Services and Finance, for example, consultants had been brought in to maintain continuity during the transition period.

The Chief Executive indicated that her thinking had been informed by research into the Council prior to joining the organisation, and in particular, themes which had emerged from reading a variety of audit reports, such as the Council's inability to deliver Improvement Plans. In addition, meetings with staff and partner organisations within the first couple of months of joining the Council had given rise to several strong and consistent messages, such as the fact that the Council's current IT was impeding progress, and that opportunities were being missed due to silo-working, particularly in children's services. A further series of meetings with staff once the proposals for change had been developed had confirmed the feeling that they were the right way forward. The Chief Executive added that the new Executive Directors were currently being kept relatively free of managerial responsibility in order to give them time to plan how to deal with the issues arising from the restructuring. There was a lot of money in the budget for this. The Council had drawn heavily on interim management – largely from within the Council but also by employing two consultants - to ensure a smooth transition. The full cost would be known in September or October, but the Chief Executive was entirely confident that it would come within budget.

There was concern that, as a 'weak' Authority, the Council was being over-ambitious in trying to implement too big a change too quickly. Clarification was sought as to what steps were being taken to learn from those Councils rated 'excellent', and whether the model being proposed for the restructuring was unique to Harrow.

In response, the Leader stated that he felt the model now being implemented was, and should be, unique to Harrow. For this reason, and especially because it was an area-based model, the Council was being cautious and implementing it step by step, not rolling it out universally. The roll-out of the public realm maintenance services would be gradually built on, with the roll-out of community and youth, and then education services. When the NHP was rolled out to other areas, there may be variations. The Council was therefore taking a pragmatic route, getting feedback from residents and stakeholders and reviewing and evaluating at each stage, to ensure that it was taking the right way forward.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that these were important issues. She confirmed that the changes being made had been proposed because they were believed to be right for Harrow, and were designed to meet local needs. She agreed that there were lessons to be learnt from 'excellent' rated Authorities and advised that the Executive Director (Organisational Development) had spent a lot of time at the London Borough of Camden looking at their performance management system. However, there were also lessons to be learnt from failing authorities. In particular, some authorities which had previously implemented an area-based service delivery model had failed, because they had not consulted and listened to residents and staff, or devolved down funding, or they had put services at risk. Some Authorities had even rolled out child protection services on an area basis; this was wholly inappropriate and would not be done in Harrow.

At a Member's request, the Leader spoke about the risks associated with the project. These included financial risks, risks associated with changing the senior management, risks associated with the re-organisation of Education Services, and risks arising simply from the size of the agenda. Again, for this reason the NHP was being implemented with a pragmatic, step by step approach. Risk was being taken seriously and risk assessments were part of each report on the NHP.

The Chief Executive added that, from her point of view, the greatest risks had been those associated with the budget, but there were also big political risks around whether Members would recognise the need for the changes and sign up to them, and in a hung Council whether the cross-party support required would be secured. The financial issues were being resolved as a result of the huge amount of work being done on this, and with regard to the political risks, while there had been some disagreement over the order of the priorities of the NHP and the pace of change, the need for change had not

been denied. In addition, the Leader pointed out that all the bodies with responsibility for taking the NHP forward were cross-party: the New Harrow Project Panel, the Budget Review Working Group which was working through the development of the MTBS, and the Cabinet all had Members from each of the political groups.

In response to a question on Priority 2 of the Improvement Plan, the Leader stated that this priority – relating to the Council's leadership role and the change agenda – was central to the NHP. The Corporate Plan, which was currently being drawn up and which would be subject to consultation in the autumn, would develop the Council's vision, and would highlight Key Performance Indicators in service areas which were considered to have primacy. The Chief Executive advised that the Council was also addressing issues around Member development, and how leadership was developed in the organisation. She added that many of the tasks set out in the Improvement Plan had already been completed, and it would not be long before the Council would be ready to be reassessed by the IDeA Peer Review team.

The Chair was concerned that steps should be taken to ensure that Members, particularly non-Executive Members who had felt disenfranchised in the roll-out of the pilot scheme, were involved in future roll-outs. The Leader confirmed that opportunities for Members to engage in the roll-out would be sought. In South Harrow, the Ward Councillors had been very involved, and although the Area Forums were not being re-established, there would be forums for Members in their areas. The Chief Executive added that these challenges were not only an issue for the Executive but also for scrutiny, and that scrutiny needed to consider how it would respond. The Chair requested that it be noted that the Committee would like to see a more structured approach to Member involvement in the roll-out, and to see other Members built into the process.

It was noted that the Chief Executive had earlier identified four components to the NHP and that one of the components, the public realm maintenance services pilot, had been strongly project-managed. The extent to which the other three areas were being project managed, and whether this process was being documented, were queried.

The Chief Executive advised that the work on developing the Medium Term Budget Strategy had effectively been completed. With regard to the work being done by the Executive Directors on the re-organisation, some of this was supported by the project management system and documented on Project Initiation Documents (PIDs). A PID was also available for the development of the IT strategy, the component of the NHP which lent itself best to the project management approach. In response to further questions, the Chief Executive reported that the changing of the staffing structure had not yet been documented as the first phase had not been completed, but in relation to the Area Directors this process would be formally documented, and those documents would be available to the Committee and in the public domain.

There was some discussion as to how much progress had been made on the tasks relating to Member development set out under Priority 5 of the Improvement Plan, and the Chief Executive undertook to check this before the next meeting of the Member Development Panel.

A Member noted that newsletters about the NHP had been produced for South Harrow residents, but felt that a lot more work needed to be done on raising public awareness of the NHP as a whole, particularly among residents living in the areas to which the pilot scheme would be rolled out later. The Leader stated that a MORI survey had shown that public awareness of the NHP had increased greatly since it had begun, but agreed a lot more work was needed on this. He added that the Council's new communications strategy, which was due to be produced in the autumn, may assist in addressing this.

Information was requested on the reaction of staff to the changes. The Chief Executive indicated that there had been a variety of reactions. A large group of staff had been energised by the changes. Inevitably, some people were concerned by them, but it was hoped that once they saw the changes which would be made at middle management and supervisory level, those staff would be reassured. There was also some cynicism about the changes, and while some members of staff were passively cynical, others were trying to ensure that their sections remained unchanged. There had been a lot of communication with staff, however, via newsletters and Freda, the virtual employee, and the IIP accreditation team which had carried out a re-inspection of the Council recently had commented positively on this. The Leader added that while the Council had seen the departure of a number of Chief Officers, staff were queuing up to join the teams working on the public realm maintenance services pilot. The Chair confirmed that the scrutiny review of the pilot scheme had found that staff had been energised, although it had also found that there were a number of issues which needed to be

bedded in.

In response to a further query regarding staff retention, the Chief Executive advised that the Council had one of the most stable workforces in London. This had advantages in that there were a lot of staff with a great deal of experience, knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting Harrow, but it also had disadvantages, particularly in terms of bringing in innovation. In addition, many staff had been doing the same job for many years and needed to be re-energised.

Concern was expressed about the role of scrutiny in external assessments, as set out in paragraph 6 of Appendix 3 to the Improvement Plan, and the rationale behind it was queried. Specifically, there was concern that there may be occasions on which it would be appropriate for scrutiny to see external assessment reports at the same time as the Executive, for example because of delays in the implementation of an Action Plan or the proper consideration of the matter. There was also a desire for scrutiny to remain independent, and not to become associated with the success or failure of action plans; it was felt that this was the Executive's responsibility. Some amendments to the procedure were therefore suggested.

The Chief Executive reported that the process outlined at Appendix 3 had been drawn up because there had previously been a complete lack of procedure for dealing with this. The Improvement Plan had already been agreed with the Audit Commission, but the issues raised could be taken into account in the next phase. This was agreed.

With regard to the outcome of the pilot scheme, a Member noted that MORI surveys had found that satisfaction with the area had largely stayed the same or slightly decreased, and satisfaction with the Council had decreased. Why residents had not noticed the improvements was queried. The Chief Executive advised that there had been discussions with MORI about these results because they went against the headline indicator, which showed that 80% had noticed improvements. MORI had attributed the results to the small nature of the sample surveyed. The Leader felt that it was inappropriate to put particular weight on any one finding, and stated that the Council had received 50 or 60 unsolicited letters commenting positively on the improvements made as a result of the pilot scheme.

Upon it being requested by a Member, the Leader and the Chief Executive outlined their respective roles in the NHP. The Leader stated that his role was to set objectives in line with political priorities, such as environmental improvements and the development of an MTBS. The Chief Executive considered her role to be to attain an overall improvement in the Council's performance, by drawing together a management team which would implement the changes required. The Chair felt that there should be a clear delineation between the roles, with the political leadership separate from the body corporate, and that the way in which the Leader and the Chief Executive had answered Members' questions had demonstrated that. On behalf of the Committee, she thanked them for coming.

APPENDIX 2**Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

(Membership)	Delete Substitute	Choudhury Lavingia
(Reserve Membership)	Delete Substitute	2. Lavingia 2. Mitzi Green
	Delete Substitute	3. Nana Asante 3. Toms

Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

(Membership)	Delete Substitute	Nana Asante Ismail
	Delete Substitute	Omar Lent
(Reserve Membership)	Delete Substitute	1. Ismail 1. Blann
	Delete Substitute	4. Lent 4. Anne Whitehead

Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee

(Membership)	Delete Substitute	Nana Asante Currie
	Delete Substitute	Omar Ismail
(Reserve Membership)	Delete Substitute	1. Ismail 1. Lavingia
	Delete Substitute	2. Choudhury 2. Toms

Call-in Sub-Committee

(Reserve Membership)	Delete Substitute	3. Lent 3. Gate
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