

NEW HARROW PROJECT PANEL

8 JULY 2003

Chair: * Councillor A T Foulds

Councillors: * C Mote * D Ashton (1)
* O'Dell

* Denotes Member present

(1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillor Jean Lammiman also attended this meeting in a participating role. See Minute 9].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1: South Harrow Public Realm Maintenance Services Pilot**

The Panel received a presentation and report from the Head of Contract Services, which evaluated the progress on the New Harrow Project - South Harrow Public Realm Maintenance Services Pilot to date. The presentation of the Head of Contract Services detailed the current public realm maintenance services provided to residents and demonstrated why a new and different approach to public realm maintenance services was necessary. The Head of Contract Services also discussed the project and its link to central government's 'Liveability Agenda'.

Members were additionally informed that the objectives of the pilot had been achieved and the main learning points to note from the work to date. The Head of Contract Services advised Members of the results of the MORI Survey May 2003, which was largely positive, based on an evaluation of the past six months, for example, it was recorded that 82% of those surveyed felt that the streets in South Harrow were cleaner and brighter. Resident satisfaction surveys and newsletter feedback forms were also conducted and, in line with the MORI Poll, had produced positive results. Members noted that areas of improvement raised by residents were related to traffic management and congestion.

The Head of Contract Services also discussed the Best Value aspects of the project, the current Operational Service Standards and the Added Value Benefits of the new approach. Members were also invited to compare the New Harrow Project against similar schemes devised by other local authorities, such as the London Borough of Camden's 'Boulevard Project'. The medium and long term expectations of the project were also discussed and a plan to enable continuous improvement was also explained.

A Member of the Panel commented on the statement on page 18 of the report; that it would not be desirable for competition to result in the return of the client/contractor split; and stated that he felt that it would be incorrect for the Authority to fetter its discretion in such a matter. In response, the Chair informed the Panel that market testing was not mandatory and that there would be flexibility around this issue. The Member also raised the issue that the figure of £1.90 per week, quoted as being the additional cost to each household for good standards of public realm maintenance, may be good value for those who will be currently benefiting from the project but not such good value for those who live in areas that will be rolled-out last and that the Authority needed to take this into account.

The Member also expressed concern in relation to the information presented on page 30 of the report; that economies of scale, which will be realised when all nine areas are operational, equate to approximately 28% of the gross cost of Area 1. The Member felt that the figure quoted was optimistic and that the economies of scale needed to be monitored closely and regularly by either Cabinet or the Budget Review Working Group. Responding, the Chair advised that alongside economies of scale there was also economies of repetition and that as the project was rolled-out, the Authority would become more competent at carrying out project-related actions, which would in turn decrease costs.

Another Member of the Panel wished to congratulate all those involved with the work in Area 1 and described the outcome as a major achievement for the whole of the Borough. The Member added that the Authority had obtained political recognition from this project, specifically in terms of carrying out manifesto promises made to the public.

The Chair thanked the Head of Contract Services for his thorough analysis of the progress so far and welcomed the fact that the pilot had achieved the set objectives. The Chair also invited the Panel to agree the recommendations contained within the report and to add another recommendation; that the Council staff working on the New Harrow Project be congratulated for their superb work and efforts to date.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

(1) That the recommendations contained within the report be agreed, as now amended, to read: -

- (i) To note that the South Harrow Public Realm Maintenance Services Pilot has achieved the objectives agreed by the New Harrow Project Panel;
- (ii) that the service standards and service frequencies be deemed as appropriate;
- (iii) that the Public Realm Maintenance Services approach be rolled-out across the Borough;
- (iv) that the Council staff working on the New Harrow Project be congratulated for their superb work and efforts to date;
- (v) that Cabinet be requested to re-examine the balance between cost and benefits/impact of the project, as part of the 2004/2005 budget review process.

(2) that the report of the Head of Contract Services be welcomed and noted.

RECOMMENDATION 2: New Harrow Project – Public Realm Maintenance Services – Roll Out to Areas 2 and 3

The Panel received the report of the Head of Contract Services, which provided a methodology for the determination of the New Harrow Project Operational Areas 2 and 3, together with a summary of the roll-out plan and initial capital expenditure proposal for Area 1 and the Town Centre.

With reference to the management factors to inform area selection, the Head of Contract Services informed Members that the following factors needed to be taken into consideration: proximity to operationally live area; customer volumes, development initiatives and community profiles. The Panel then received assessments on both Areas 2 and 3 based on the latter factors, as well as an overview of the roll-out programme in its entirety. Members were additionally informed of the capital resources required to see the project through to a successful conclusion.

The Head of Contract Services proposed to the Panel that Area 2 consist of the following Wards: Greenhill, Marlborough and Wealdstone; and that Area 3 consist of the following Wards: Kenton East and Kenton West.

The Chair thanked the Head of Contract Services for a thorough account of the roll-out process and financial implications and invited the Panel to agree the recommendations as set out in the report. All Members of the Panel unanimously agreed to recommendation 1; that the New Harrow Project Operational Area 2 be comprised of the following Ward: Greenhill, Marlborough and Wealdstone. However, two Members expressed concern about recommendation 2; that the New Harrow Project Operational Area 3 be comprised of the following Ward: Kenton West and Kenton East.

The Members advised that their reservations were based on the following reasoning: that the grounds for selecting Area 2 were not equal to the grounds for selecting Area 3, e.g. use of the community profiles. The Members added that the decision was also based on out-of-date census data and old Ward boundaries. It was proposed by these two Members that the decision on which Wards should constitute Area 3 be deferred to the meeting of Cabinet on 15 July 2003. The Members also requested that the following Wards be considered as constituting Area 3: Belmont and Stanmore Park. Another Member of the Panel wished for it to be made clear that the Belmont Circle shopping area would be dealt with under the current proposal of the Kenton East and Kenton West Wards.

The Chair agreed that it would be reasonable to defer the decision to the meeting of Cabinet, in order for discussions to take place regarding which Wards were most

suitable to comprise as Area 3. The Chief Executive requested that an addendum to this report be submitted to the meeting of Cabinet, which would provide an evaluation on the suitability of the proposed (Ward) areas: Kenton East and Kenton West or Belmont and Stanmore Park.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

- (1) That the New Harrow Project Operational Area 2 be comprised of the following Wards: Greenhill, Marlborough and Wealdstone.
- (2) that the decision to confirm the New Harrow Project Operational Area 3 be deferred to the meeting of Cabinet on 15 July 2003;
- (3) that an addendum to this report be submitted to the meeting of Cabinet, which would provide an evaluation on the suitability of the proposed (Ward) areas.

PART II - MINUTES

35. **Appointment of Chair:**
RESOLVED: To note the appointment of Councillor Foulds at the meeting of Cabinet on 20 May 2003, under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 7.2 (Part 4B of the Constitution), as Chair of the New Harrow Project Panel for the 2003/2004 Municipal Year.
36. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**
RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Miss Lyne	Councillor D Ashton
37. **Declarations of Interest:**
RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business to be transacted at this meeting.
38. **Arrangement of Agenda:**
RESOLVED: (1) That all items be considered with the press and public present;

(2) that item 10 'Audit Commission Inspection – South Harrow Pilot' be taken in advance of item 6 'Minutes'.
39. **Appointment of Vice-Chair:**
The Chair moved and it was seconded that Councillor O'Dell be appointed as Vice Chair of the Panel for the 2003/2004 Municipal Year. However, it was also moved and seconded that Councillor C Mote be appointed as Vice Chair of the Panel for the 2003/2004 Municipal Year. On the Chair's casting vote, it was

RESOLVED: That Councillor O'Dell be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2003/2004 Municipal Year.
40. **Audit Commission Inspection - South Harrow Pilot:**
The Panel received a presentation from representatives of the Audit Commission, Mr Neil Foss and Mr Alan Lovett, which outlined the Commission's key findings, areas for improvement and recommendations for the future. Members were informed that an in-depth analysis of the New Harrow Project - South Harrow Pilot was contained in the Audit Commission's report of July 2003, which was distributed to Members at the start of the meeting. Members were requested to consider the presentation and report in the context of the other New Harrow Project reports to be received by the Panel at this meeting.

The Panel was informed that the Commission's terms of reference included an assessment of target setting, performance monitoring mechanisms/systems and actual performance, as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of multi-tasking, improvements to service accessibility and changes in the management structure. In addition, the Commission was tasked with highlighting learning issues for future thematic reviews.

Members were informed that the Commission's current work did not preclude any future work or judgments, which may be made as part of the Commission's statutory

duties. The Panel was advised that the Commission would be conducting the second stage of the New Harrow Project inspection in March 2004.

The representatives from the Commission then provided Members of the Panel with a summary of the key findings arising from the investigation. The Panel noted potential risks for the project, for example, that the current expectations of those living and working in South Harrow will not be met. The report also highlighted a number of positive aspects arising from the New Harrow Project - South Harrow Pilot, namely the significant improvement in service delivery compared to other parts of the Borough; evidenced by a reduction in graffiti, fly-posting, litter and an increase in cleaner pavements and the maintenance of parks and highway grass verges. An improvement to the perceived safety of the area was also evident in residents' surveys.

The Panel was also notified of areas for improvement, such as the fact that there is currently no system to redress poor performance should it occur and there was a need for greater community involvement. The Commission also made several recommendations to the Panel should Members agree to roll-out the pilot to other areas of the Borough. The report circulated to Members at the start of the meeting detailed the necessary steps recommended by the Commission to mitigate the risks involved in rolling-out the project.

The Chair thanked the representatives of the Audit Commission for their presentation and comprehensive report and invited Members of the Panel discuss the findings and recommendations made by the Commission. A Member of the Panel queried the following recommendation: review the cost and performance of the pilot against comparable authorities and provide a more rigorous comparison; and requested clarification on how comparisons could be made. In response, Mr Foss advised that, as a starting point, the Authority should analyse existing information published by the Commission on similar local authority initiatives, with reference to costs, etc.

The Member also raised a query regarding an area identified as requiring improvement: grounds maintenance in non-pilot areas being delivered to a much lower standard; and questioned whether the existing contractors were performing to agreed standards. Responding, Mr Foss confirmed that the specification standard was not being met in areas outside the pilot area and that this needed to be addressed prior to the roll-out. The Chair informed the Panel that he was aware that there were issues of staff shortage in this section of the Authority due to sickness, which could have influenced the standard, and stated that the issue would be explored.

The Chair requested further clarification from the Commission with regard to the following area for improvement: there is a need for greater community engagement, as the Authority was pleased with its Beacon Council status and community relations. Mr Foss advised that there was a need to treat members of the community with increased sensitivity and used the example of the Brooke Avenue residents and the sale of Khat, which was not illegal. Members were informed that the Commission had noted the range of activities that the Council was involved in and that these should be progressed throughout the roll-out of the project.

The Chair stated that he was pleased with the Commission's report on the whole and recognised that there were areas for improvement, for example street lighting issues, and that these areas would be analysed and dealt with accordingly. The Chair also wished to clarify that the Authority would be seeking to procure 'First Contact' strategic partners, rather than just a single partner. He also stated that the Authority was highly in favour of increased involvement from local businesses and that this would be encouraged.

Another Member of the Panel queried the following area for improvement highlighted by the Commission; that there is currently no system to redress poor performance should it occur. In response, the Head of Contract Services advised that the ethos of the divisional staff working on the New Harrow Project - South Harrow Pilot had adopted a 'get it right first time' approach and that to date this approach had been highly successful. Mr Foss informed Members that the Commission's main reservation was that there were currently no safeguards in the event of a drop in performance. A Member of the Panel advised that this issue required attention.

The Chair welcomed the presentation by the representatives from the Audit Commission and advised that the potential risks, positive aspects, areas for improvement and recommendations arising from the report would be digested by Members following the meeting and acted upon accordingly. The Chair also advised that the Panel would look forward to receiving the next update from the Commission in

March 2004.

RESOLVED: (1) That the presentation of the Audit Commission be welcomed and noted.

(2) that the recommendations arising from the report be considered in context with the other reports on the New Harrow Project with a view to rolling out the project to Areas 2 and 3 of the Borough.

41. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

42. **Public Questions and Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no public questions or petitions submitted to this meeting.

43. **New Harrow Project - South Harrow Public Realm Maintenance Services Pilot - Scrutiny Review Report:**

The Panel received the report of the Scrutiny Review Group from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which provided Members with a review of the progress made on the New Harrow Project - South Harrow Pilot and a conclusion on whether the Public Realm Maintenance Services Pilot should be rolled out across the Borough. Members were requested to consider this report in the context of the other New Harrow Project reports to be received by the Panel at this meeting.

A Member of the Scrutiny Review Group, Councillor Jean Lammiman, gave a brief presentation to the Panel on the Group's findings and recommendations. Councillor Lammiman welcomed the report of the Audit Commission and advised that there were some areas of both reports that were distinctly familiar. Members were informed that the review had been conducted to a strict timescale in order to maintain the momentum and progression of the project.

The following issues were considered by the Group; environmental standards and achievements against targets, performance management systems, customer satisfaction, arrangements for resident involvement in the pilot, partnership working and the effects on other service standards, community development, plans for ongoing maintenance of standards and sustainability, financial implications, costs and benefits, workforce satisfaction, the impact on staff and public not involved in the pilot, lessons learnt, the role of the Portfolio Holders, innovations and other strategic issues.

Members of the Panel were informed that there were many positive aspects of the project to report on, namely; that the pilot had achieved objectives determined by the New Harrow Project Panel; there standards had improved in all areas (except in street lighting and channel obstructions); that surveys had recorded high levels of customer satisfaction; that the youth facilities and initiatives developed were of a high quality; and that the use of the Local Environmental Quality Survey (LEQS), in terms of measuring standards, was effective.

Councillor Lammiman also raised the following key points in relation to areas for improvement; increased community involvement (youth, elderly, ethnic minorities); increased information sharing and support was required by local businesses and residents' associations; cross-departmental collaboration was required; more benchmarking could be carried out; Information Communication Technology (ICT) needed to be given greater support and that regular updates needed to be given on ICT issues; and that the MORI Poll samples needed to be larger.

The Group had devised 17 recommendations for the Panel to consider and Members discussed a number of these recommendations in turn. A Member of the Panel queried recommendation 13; an investigation should be undertaken on how housing land can be brought to the same enhanced environmental maintenance standard being implemented in the pilot area through collaborative working. Responding, Councillor Lammiman clarified that this recommendation was intended to produce increased collaborative working between the Council's Housing Services and Environmental and Contract Services, for example, in relation to Brooke Avenue. The Chair wished for it to be recorded that this recommendation would be investigated at a corporate level.

Another Member of the Panel wished to record his support for recommendation 5; that consideration be given to the work now commencing with local schools in the pilot area to be extended across the Borough in a programme which contributes to citizen

development. The Head of Contract Services advised that this recommendation was currently in the development stage and that it was envisaged that it would eventually be Borough-wide.

The Chair welcomed the report and positive approach of the Scrutiny Review Group and thanked the Members and officers involved in the collation of the report. In addition, the Chair informed the Panel that the Chief Executive and himself would be attending the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 July 2003 to respond to Members' questions on the New Harrow Project - South Harrow Pilot. The Chief Executive stated that it was important for all the inspection, review and evaluation reports to be received at the same meeting in order for Members to consider each report in context prior to the decision being made to roll-out the project to areas 2 and 3 of the Borough.

RESOLVED: (1) That the report of the Scrutiny Review Group from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be welcomed and noted;

(2) that the recommendations arising from the report be considered in context with the other reports on the New Harrow Project with a view to rolling out the project to Areas 2 and 3 of the Borough.

44. **South Harrow Public Realm Maintenance Services Pilot - Evaluation Report:**
See Recommendation 1.
45. **New Harrow Project - Public Realm Maintenance Services - Roll Out to Areas 2 & 3:**
See Recommendation 2.
46. **Re-naming of New Harrow Project Pilot Area:**
RESOLVED: (1) That the name of the pilot area be changed to South and West Harrow;
- (2) that the name of the pilot newsletter be changed to the 'South and West Harrow News'.
47. **Date of the Next Meeting:**
RESOLVED: That Members of the Panel be consulted on the date of the next meeting in due course.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 8.29 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR A T FOULDS
Chair