

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**22 OCTOBER 2003**

Chair: * Councillor Blann

Councillors:	* Billson (2)	* Miles
	* Mrs Kinnear	* Seymour
	* Lavingia	* Anne Whitehead (4)

* Denotes Member present
(2), (4) Denote category of Reserve Member

51. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note the attendance of the following Reserve Members:Ordinary MemberCouncillor Lent
Councillor Janet MoteReserve MemberCouncillor Ann Whitehead
Councillor Billson52. **Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note the following declaration of interest:

(1) Councillor Blann declared an interest in Agenda item 11, under which the Review of Waste Management Strategy would be discussed, as he was a board Member of the West London Waste Authority. He remained present and spoke on the item.

53. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.54. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.55. **Public Questions:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no public questions to be received at this meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 18 (Part 4B of the Constitution).56. **Petitions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions had been received at this meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4B of the Constitution)57. **Deputations:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no public questions, petitions or deputations submitted to this meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.58. **Your Home, Your Needs Best Value Review and Action Plan:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Head of Housing and Environmental Health which presented the final report of the Your Home Your Needs Best Value Review. The Chair informed the meeting that the Review had been endorsed by Cabinet and it was the Sub-Committee's responsibility to identify key areas to monitor.

An Officer informed the meeting that the Review was a full service review and had covered all functions of the Housing Department. The review consisted of five mini reviews covering all areas of the service.

The Council had been accepted to set-up an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and required a 2* inspection report to receive £11.3 million funding to improve housing stock. The inspection would take place six months after the ALMO had gone live in the spring. A different Best Value inspection was due to take place in November,

the results of which would be useful in ensuring that the inspection of the ALMO was successful. In response to questions from a Member, an Officer commented that the viability of the ALMO in the long-term would be called into question if the housing stock continued to reduce. However, the ALMO would release valuable resources for essential improvements to the current housing stock. The Chair commented that the Sub-Committee would require a report on the ALMO between its establishment and its inspection to ensure that the ALMO was on course to receive the necessary 2* rating.

During discussion of the Best Value improvement plan, Officers informed the meeting that if the Housing Strategy was declared 'fit for purpose' when submitted to Housing for London, in future years officers would not have to submit the whole document each year, but just a brief update. Officers were confident their submission this year would be 'fit for purpose' as several improvements had been made to last year's submission, which had been judged very close to the necessary standard.

During discussion of turn around time of vacant properties, officers commented that the majority of homes were ready for occupancy within 30 days. Many of the delays longer than this were due to the requirement for adaptations to the property. Housing and Social Services were currently working together to reduce these delays.

The Sub-Committee identified areas which to monitor (appendix A) and suggested that areas for monitoring which fell outside of the remit of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee should be monitored by the appropriate Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted

(2) the objectives listed in appendix A be monitored by the relevant Scrutiny Sub-Committee

59. **Housing Need and Supply Annual Statistical Summary 2002/2003:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Head of Housing and Environmental Health Services which provided a compilation of statistics relating to housing need and supply during 2002/2003. Officers reminded the meeting that this report had previously appeared annually on the Cabinet Information Circular.

The report included statistics on dwelling stock, dwelling vacancies, homelessness, and Housing Association nominations and own allocations. The Officer referred the Sub-Committee to statistics relating to Council dwelling stock and explained that stock had been depleted by people purchasing homes through the 'right to buy' scheme throughout the 1980's. The large decrease between 2002 and 2003 could be largely attributable to the transfer of Rayners Lane Estate to the Home Group in October 2002.

Discussing the number of housing association dwellings, Officers commented that Harrow had the second lowest social housing stock in London. Many of the stock were sheltered units when the demand was for family homes. To remedy this new social housing stock was being built via housing associations to meet demand, where possible.

An Officer informed the meeting that Harrow was one of only a few Councils to have no homeless people in bed and breakfast accommodation. In response to a question from a Member, an officer explained that not all the 2000 people who had claimed to be homeless were necessarily homeless. Officers had worked with the 399 applicants who had been accepted as homeless to provide options to remedy their situation. The Council attempted to work with new applicants to provide them with solutions before they are accepted as homeless. As a result, Harrow had the second lowest homeless acceptances in London. Harrow attempted to find solutions for applicant's difficulties and get applicants to take responsibility for their situation. In response to comments from Members, officers explained that they were only responsible for housing certain categories of people, although they did try to find solutions for all homeless people.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

60. **Final Draft Report of the Review of Consultation for Transportation and Highway Schemes:**

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that the Review was before them for final approval before it went to the Portfolio Holder and asked for any comments from the meeting.

A Member noted that he had comments on certain recommendations of the review. He stated that he was not a wholehearted supporter of public meetings as they could be unrepresentative of diverse opinions and could be taken over by a single view. Public meetings needed to be arranged by the Council and ensure all views were represented

at them. In regard to recommendation Four, Members commented that they were not sure face to face meetings with businesses were necessary. However, Members did comment that it was important that businesses were fully aware of the timescale of the implementation of the scheme. Consultation was often far in advance of the implementation of the scheme and in this time businesses had sometimes forgotten about the implications of the scheme.

Discussing recommendation seven, a Member commented that it was important to be careful about the timing of consultation with residents of neighbouring roads and suggested they could be consulted in the first review of the scheme rather than before the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) has begun operation. In discussion of recommendation eight, Members commented that while it might be advantageous to explain the scheme street by street, it may mean too much work for officers.

The Chair referred the Group to an additional tabled submission to the Review, which the Sub-Committee agreed to include in the Review.

RESOLVED: That the comments of the Panel be noted and the final draft of the Review of Consultation for Transportation and Highway Schemes be approved.

61. **Members' Verbal Progress Reports on Reviews:**

The Chair informed the meeting that the Mayor's Waste Management Strategy had now been published and that Officers would make a presentation comparing it with Harrow's strategy to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee. Following discussions with officers it had been suggested that it may be a waste of resources to continue with the Review as the strategy would now have to be changed. Consideration was required of the implications of Transferable Landfill Allowances and the scope for negotiation between boroughs for the 'selling' of rubbish.

These changes would mean revisions to Harrow's own strategy would be required.

RESOLVED: That (1) a decision on the Review of Waste Management Strategy be made at the next meeting.

(2) Officers prepare a report on the Mayor's Waste Management Strategy for the next meeting of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.10 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ALAN BLANN
Chair

Your Home, Your Needs Best Value Review and Action Plan

Key Targets Selected for Examination by the Scrutiny Sub-Committees:

Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Customer Services Performance Improvement Plan (*)

- Develop Customer Care Charter
- Improve quality of reception services to our customers
- Provide an out of hours services
- Compensation policy to be developed
- Review implementation of revised service standards

Equalities Performance Improvement Plan (*)

- Undertake BME needs survey
- Training
- Provide publicity on racial harassment and domestic violence in different languages
- Housing staff to reflect community profile

Strategy and Enabling Performance Improvement Plan (*)

- Develop scope and focus of BME housing strategy
- Improve the Housing Strategy documentation
- Achieve fit for purpose standard
- Develop housing links with corporate planning and partnership work and regional for a
- Develop the supported housing/Supporting People strategy

Enabling Performance Plan (*)

- Maximise the supply of affordable housing
- Develop more effective working relationships with RSLs
- Increase corporate focus on housing priorities

Private Sector Housing Performance Improvement Plan

- Implement a comprehensive Private Sector renewal strategy (Report July 2004)
- Review the current organisational structure (*)
- Implement revised Grants Policy (See Annual Report 2004)
- Improve enforcement activity levels for non compliant landlords and to improve HMO registration levels (Monitor when active)
- Increase the annual number of refurbished empty homes (*)

Housing Needs Performance Improvement Plan

- Ensure that Government targets and requirements are met (Regular updates)
- Better performance management through improved business and service plans (*)

Housing Advice Service Improvement Plan

- Produce a marketing strategy for the Housing Advice Service including how to reach minority and hard to reach groups (August 2004)

Housing Assessment Improvement Plan

- Improve our assessment performance (*)

Housing Provision – Temporary Accommodation

- Develop new and appropriate accommodation for those in housing need (*)

Landlord Services Performance Improvement Plan

- Regular updates on time taken for repairs and void turnaround

Recycling – Performance Improvement Plan

- Offer households living on our estates easy access to recycling facilities for paper, metals, textiles, plastics and glass (*)
- Offer households living in Council properties easy to access advice on recycling. (furniture, computer parts and home composting) (Copy when information produced)

Caretaking Performance Improvement Plan

- Report back on the reshaped Caretaking Service
- Update on market testing (*)

Management of Garages and Parking Improvement Plan

- Regular statistics on garage occupancy

Rent Arrears Performance Improvement Plan

- Regular report including of exception reports in arrears over 13 weeks

Abandoned/Nuisance Vehicles – Performance Improvement Plan

- Reduce the number of vehicles abandoned on estates (*)

Grounds Maintenance – Performance Improvement Plan

- Update on market testing of service (*)

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Strategy and Enabling Performance Improvement Plan

- Develop the supported housing/Supporting People strategy

Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub Committee

Strategy and Enabling Performance Improvement Plan

- Developing links with corporate planning & partnership work and regional fora
- Develop scope and focus of BME housing strategy

Anti-Social Behaviour and Nuisance – Performance Improvement Plan

- Monitor all progress

Domestic Violence Performance Improvement Plan

Racial Harassment Improvement Plan