

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**27 SEPTEMBER 2004**

Chair: * Councillor Blann

Councillors: * Arnold * Miles
 * Knowles * Seymour
 * Lavingia * Anne Whitehead (4)

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

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**105. **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 Lent	Councillor Anne Whitehead

106. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note the following declaration of interest by a Member present relating to the business to be transacted at this meeting: -

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
Councillor Knowles	Councillor Knowles declared a personal interest in the ALMO shadow board in his capacity as Council Representative, but in accordance with Paragraph 12.2 of the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors he remained and took part in discussions on the agenda item in question.

107. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

108. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2004, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

109. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.

110. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.

111. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.

112. **Reference from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 July 2004:**

The Sub-Committee received a reference from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 July 2004, asking the Sub-Committee to comment on the recommendation regarding the Housing Department entering a partnering contract and appointing contract administrators for the delivery of the stock investment capital programme for 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding the estimated cost of fees being 10% of the work costs, officers replied that it was anticipated that 10% would be sufficient for budget purposes as the service would be put out to tender and the tendering process would ensure keen prices at less than 10% of work costs.

A Member queried the purpose of the reference from Cabinet as the decision on the matter had already been taken.

In response to this comment, officers stated that there was an opportunity to influence the process and the content of the contract.

A Member raised concerns regarding the partnering contract as a similar arrangement had led to an overspend in the provision of the response maintenance service during the last financial year.

Officers confirmed that the overspend had arisen in the closing of the financial year ended 31 March 2004 in order that the partnering contracts could be put in place and become effective from 1 April 2004. The partnering contracts were not responsible for the response maintenance overspend.

In response to a question regarding the ALMO, officers replied that the ALMO would be launched in the period leading up to 31 December 2004. It was advised that the estimated budget for the following year's capital housing investment programme was based on the assumption that the Council would achieve the two star rating.

Members stressed that the Council should work towards the implementation of the agreement with the ODPM regarding the launch of the ALMO and not postpone this to future years.

In response to a Member's concern regarding the budget being manageable, officers stated that the estimated budget for the next year had been reduced, with compensatory increases included in 2006/07 and 2007/08.

RESOLVED: That the comments above be brought to the attention of Cabinet.

113. **Presentation on the Green Belt Management Policy:**

The Sub-Committee received an officer presentation on the development of a Green Belt Management Strategy in Harrow.

The green belt made up 15% of the land in Harrow and the Council owned half of this. It was advised that six consultancy firms had been asked to suggest strategies on the development of the green belt with a view to increasing amenities and tourism, protecting the natural environment and identifying funding opportunities. The chosen firm would start the assignment on 1 November and the strategy was expected to be finalised in late February. A consultation with landowners and members of the community on the future of the green belt would be included in the tasks undertaken by the consultants. The strategy would focus on Council-owned land, although private land would be affected through planning requirements, which would be in line with the strategy on the green belt.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the costs of developing and implementing the strategy, officers reported that the consultants were expected to include the estimated costs of the implementation in their bids.

Members agreed that a letter be written to the Portfolio Holder to ask that a copy of the consultants' final report be submitted to the Sub-committee once published.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report regarding the Green Belt Management Strategy be submitted to the Sub-Committee for comments prior to consideration by the Cabinet and;

(2) the report be noted.

114. **Flooding:**
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Professional Services, Urban Living regarding flooding in Harrow.
- Officers advised that responsibility for drainage was split between several agencies, including the Council, and the public sewers were controlled by Thames Water. It was advised that there was no statutory duty to prevent flooding as this would be extremely expensive. Officers reported that problematic areas had been identified and that the cleaning of sewers had improved.
- Members felt that, as the Council had limited responsibility and the Sub-Committee only carried out one or two in-depth reviews per year, flooding should not be scrutinised by the Committee. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would revisit the decision should flooding become a more frequent problem, and that maps on high-risk areas be distributed to Members.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) no in-depth review on flooding be undertaken at this stage; and
(2) the report be noted.
115. **Waste Management BVPIs:**
The report of the Area Director, Urban Living, provided the Sub-Committee with a review of the Council's BVPI performance for 2003/04, which had been undertaken by consultants to prepare for the Best Value Inspection.
- It was reported that the recycling rate over the last year had improved mainly due to the roll-out of the Brown Bin Scheme. This roll-out was continuing with one round being introduced in September 2004 and three more scheduled for early 2005/06. The growth in waste per household, in 2003/04, was 1% lower than the national average. The report noted a significant increase in the BVPI for the cost of waste collection. It was felt, however, that this depended more on how the BVPI was calculated than any significant decline in efficiency. Nevertheless, the Council was to investigate this area further.
- It was noted that the kitchen waste trial would start in October, with a report to the Cabinet in April on the results of the scheme. Members were reminded that landfill costs were gradually increasing and that augmented recycling rates would lead to significant savings in the long term.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) officers report back on the final conclusions of the Audit; and
(2) the report be noted.
116. **Progress Report on the Scrutiny Review:**
The Chair reported that Members of the Sub-Committee had carried out several visits with regard to the in-depth review of Waste Management; to date, the London Borough of Bexley and Daventry District Council had been visited. It was noted that the Sub-Committee planned to visit the London Borough of Barnet to look at their policies on waste management which included the issuing of penalties to those who did not participate in the recycling scheme. Members would also monitor the development of Harrow's Brown Bin Scheme and the kitchen waste trial.
- RESOLVED:** That the verbal report be noted.
117. **Housing Need & Supply Annual Statistical Summary 2003/2004:**
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Strategy, Urban Living outlining the statistics relating to housing need and supply during 2003/04.
- It was noted that homelessness had been reduced and that housing alternatives for risk groups had successfully been found. It was advised that people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities were slightly overrepresented in homelessness figures across London.
- In response to a question from a Member regarding the number of applicants who were not considered by officers to be eligible for housing, officers replied that the figures for all applications and decisions regarding housing were available.
- Responding to a question regarding the anticipated sale of housing stock, officers informed the Sub-Committee that these figures depended on government legislation, the right to buy and discounts available.

The statistics in 'Rent Arrears and Voids for LA Housing Stock', set out in the Information Circular, were discussed and the Sub-Committee requested that in future reports:-

- the graphs be labelled;
- the statistics display the results over several months to a year; and
- figures for long outstanding rental arrears (2 to 3 months) be included.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

118. **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2003/04:**

RESOLVED: That the draft Chair's report of the Sub-Committee's work over the past year for inclusion in the 2003/04 scrutiny annual report be approved.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 9.33 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ALAN BLANN
Chair