



HARROW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 February 2006

(1) Present:

Harrow Strategic Partnership Board Members:

Councillor Jean Lammiman	Conservative Representative	Harrow Council
Councillor Paddy Lyne	Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group	Harrow Council
Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan *	Communications, Partnership and Human Resources PH	Harrow Council
Dr Karim Murji	Metropolitan Police Authority	Metropolitan Police Authority
Malcolm Parr	Harrow in Business	Business Sector Representative
Mike Coker	Community Linkup	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Asoke Dutta	Harrow Association of Voluntary Service	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Kris Fryer	Harrow Citizen's Advice Bureau	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Janet Smith	MIND in Harrow	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative
Professor Keith Phillips	University of Westminster	Higher Education Representative
Allan Conway	President, North West London Chamber of Commerce	London Chamber of Commerce

(* in the Chair)

Apologies were received from:-

Councillor Navin Shah (Leader, Harrow Council), Geoff Rose (Chair, Harrow Primary Care Trust) and Denis Lock (Kodak Limited, Business Sector Representative).

(2) Also Present as Representatives of the HSP Executive:

Joyce Markham	Chief Executive	Harrow Council
Robert Carr	Borough Commander, Harrow Police	Metropolitan Police Service
Barbara Field	Principal, Harrow College	Further Education Sector
Andrew Morgan	Chief Executive, Harrow Primary Care Trust	Health Authority Sector
Julia Smith	Chief Executive, Harrow Association of Voluntary Service	Voluntary and Community Sector

(3) The following Harrow Council Officers attended:-

Myfanwy Barrett	Director of Financial and Business Strategy	
Paul Najsarek	Director of People, Performance and Policy	Harrow Council
Deborah Palmer	Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Partnership Service	Harrow Council
Bindu Arjoon	Service Manager, Policy and Partnership Service	Harrow Council

ACTION

20. Election of Chair:

AGREED: That in the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair, Councillor Marie Louise Nolan be elected to Chair the meeting.

21. Apologies:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported the apologies received. She welcomed Malcolm Parr (Harrow In Business, Business Sector Representative) and Allan Conwy (President, North West London Chamber of Commerce) to the meeting.

22. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2005 were agreed as a correct record.

23. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

24. Budget 2006/07:

The Harrow Strategic Partnership Board received a presentation from Harrow Council's Director of Financial and Business Strategy, which provided an overview of Harrow Council's Draft Budget for 2006/07 and the consultation process undertaken.

The Director stated that the Council set its budget in three areas as follows:-

- the main Revenue Budget which determined the Council Tax;
- the Housing Budget and Rents;
- the Capital Investment Programme.

She outlined the key issues, details of which are set out below:-

Spending – The Director stated that the total amount of money that the Council intended to spend during 2006/07 on services was £484m, of which a significant proportion (£125m) would be spent on schools. She identified other services on which the Council spent its money such as Community Care and Children's Services.

Funding – The Board was informed that the main source of funding was in

the form of central government grants and that from the general government grant of £166m, £110m would be ring-fenced for schools from next year. The Director identified other funding sources such as the council tax and fees and charges levied that were collected from a number of sources.

The Financial Settlement – The Director reported that the final settlement was announced by central government on 31 January 2006 and that the announcement was for two years. This would assist local authorities with medium-term planning. She added that a formulae, which had recently been restructured, was used to calculate the grant allocated to local authorities and that a number of indicators were used.

The Board was informed that the settlement of 2% received by the Council was poor when compared nationally and with the grant received by the London local authorities in London. She stated that an additional £1.3m had been received for concessionary fares. However, the total cost of providing concessionary fares was high and the funding received was a small proportion of the total cost.

The Director reported that the Council was in the process of finalising its budget. The staff pay award and the increase in pension contributions had been reflected in the budget. She identified other pressures which would affect the base budget, such as the costs associated with children's placements, asylum seekers and the services provided to children and older people. She added that after taking all these variances into account, a Council Tax increase of approximately 3% was likely. This was before any new growth or savings had been considered by the Council. In addition, inflation and the general slump in the property market required consideration. She considered this to be a challenging year for the Council.

Urban Living/People First/Corporate Directorates - The Board was informed of the types of spend in each of the Directorates and their importance. The Director mentioned that there had been a number of legislative changes in the care provided to children and that the Council had had to respond to the changes. In addition, demographic changes were a major issue, as were the increase in demand for children's services and the services to the elderly. The Council was in the process of identifying the impact of these issues on future budgets.

The Director referred to the Business Transformation Project (BTP) and the savings expected from this area. She identified other service issues in the Corporate Directorate and mentioned the Local Area Agreement (LAA) which would generate some additional funding for the Council and its partners. She stated that schools had been the main beneficiaries of the settlement.

Greater London Authority (GLA) Precept – The Director stated that a significant increase was expected. The precept would include a payment of £20.00 for the 2012 Olympics and £11.00 for extra policing. She added that the final figure would be available on 16 February 2006 and would be reported to the Cabinet on that evening.

Consultation – The Board was informed of the consultation carried out,

which included the Open Budget Process and a series of meetings with stakeholders. It was noted that the Cabinet on 16 February 2006 would consider the responses and that the full Council on 23 February 2006 would debate and determine the budget for 2006-07 to enable council tax billing to commence.

Housing Budget – The Director reported that the Council was required to maintain a separate account for its housing stock and spent £17m a year on maintenance costs. She added that:-

- the Council had, some years ago, agreed to retain its housing stock;
- £7m was spent each year to adhere to the Decent Homes Standard;
- that there would be no increase in rent in 2006/07 and that the increase thereafter would be 4.7%.

Capital Investment Programme – The Director described the Council's intended programme and how it would be funded. She highlighted the work being undertaken on the First Contact Centre and the regeneration projects. The Board was informed that the Council received some external funding for its Capital Programme and that the majority of the balance was funded by borrowing, subject to the Council having sufficient resources.

Some members of the Board commented as follows:

- that the priority for the Open Budget Process Assembly had been services provided to the 'youth' and that no mention had been made in the budget of how the Council would address this issue;
- that the voluntary sector was dependent on the money received from the Council either through grants or Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Concern was expressed that the proposed budget might lead to a reduction in the in SLAs and the grant allocated. This, in turn, would lead to a cut in the services provided by the voluntary sector;
- that the voluntary sector had been informed that the uplift would be of 2%;
- that central government's approach was for local authorities and such other bodies to "deliver more for less".

In response, Harrow Council's Director of Financial and Business Strategy and the Director of People, Performance and Policy stated that:-

- the Open Budget Panel (established following the Open Budget Process Assembly) would be presenting its report and findings to Cabinet. She confirmed that the voting at the Assembly had identified 'youth' as its priority;
- grants allocated by the Council had been inflated and not reduced, and that a response on the issue of the SLAs would be forwarded to members of the Board;
- the Council was also under pressure and that the poor settlement

from the government had not assisted the situation;

- 'ring-fencing' of £110m for schools out of £166m of general government grant would not result in any surplus for the Council;
- a considerable proportion of the resources received through the LAA would be spent on the voluntary sector;
- the additional money received from the government on concessionary fares would not result in the expansion of the service.

The Board thanked the Council's Director of Financial and Business Strategy for the presentation.

AGREED: To note the report.

DG/MB

25. Harrow Strategic Partnership Performance Management:

Andrew Morgan (Chief Executive, Harrow Primary Care Trust), in his role as the Performance Management Champion, introduced the report which updated the Board on the progress made by the HSP Performance Management Working Group. He sought agreement on the overall approach being taken in relation to the Performance Management of the HSP.

Andrew Morgan recommended the use of a balanced scorecard approach to measure outcomes as this would provide a snapshot of performance. The traffic light system would then be used to identify areas that were under performing, off target or exceeding target. He mentioned that the balanced scorecard would initially be developed to capture the indicators in the Local Area Agreements (LAA) and then applied to other areas of the Partnership's work.

The Board was informed that a benchmarking exercise of the current perceptions of the HSP would also be carried out. Attention was drawn to the questionnaire circulated with the agenda, which would initially be sent to a select group. Consideration would be given to a wider survey at a future time.

In response to questions, Paul Najsarek (Harrow Council's Director of People, Performance and Policy) reported that the intention was to send out the questionnaire before the local government elections in May 2006 so that the views of the existing councillors could be captured.

AGREED: That (1) the overall approach being taken in relation to Performance Management of the HSP be agreed;

AM/PN to
note

(2) the content of the questionnaire on Performance Management issues relating to the HSP be noted;

(3) it be noted that the benchmarking survey would be carried out in Spring 2006 before the London local government elections in May 2006.

AM/PN

26. Community Engagement in Harrow:

Bindu Arjoon (Harrow Council's Service Manager) introduced the report, which provided a summary of Harrow Council's Corporate Community Engagement Strategy and set out the proposals for a similar strategy for the HSP. She referred to the work carried out by the Council's Scrutiny Officers on community engagement.

Bindu Arjoon sought endorsement of the principles set out in the report and asked for nominations from the HSP partners to attend the Council's Link Officers' meetings to share good practice for community involvement across Harrow. She stated that it was important for the HSP partners to contribute to the Council's database of engagement activities and their outcomes through the Link Officers' Group.

Councillor Jean Lammiman (Conservative Representative, Harrow Council) commended the proposal to develop a Community Engagement Strategy for the HSP. However, Councillor Jean Lammiman stated that consultation fatigue was an issue and that the toolkit ought to be tailored.

The Chair, (speaking in her capacity as Harrow Council's Portfolio Holder for Communications, Partnership and Human Resources), commended the development of an HSP Community Engagement Strategy and highlighted the importance of engagement with the voluntary sector. She stressed the need to ensure that engagement was meaningful and that feedback was provided to those consulted.

Members of the Board commented as follows:-

BA to note

- that it was essential that those consulted were informed of what decisions they could influence and change;
- the process by which this could be achieved;
- that plain English ought to be used in any consultation exercise;
- that collaboration and empowerment of people was to be welcomed.

In response, Bindu Arjoon stated that the voluntary sector would be asked to carry out the consultation exercise on behalf of the Board and that training would be provided. In addition, a toolkit identifying a portfolio of techniques for effective community involvement would be developed. Consultees would be informed of those services that had to be provided (statutory services) and those that they could influence.

AGREED: That (1) Harrow Council's Engagement Strategy be noted;

(2) the proposed principles for community engagement be agreed;

BA

(3) a report on the development of a joint Community Engagement Strategy for the HSP be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

PN/DP

27. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Consultation Document - Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future:

Deborah Palmer (Senior Policy Officer, Harrow Council) introduced the report, which set out the response to the consultation document on Local Strategic Partnerships. She stated that, in addition to responding to the questions posed in the document, Council officers had included additional issues and that these were set out in the report and the draft letter.

A member of the Board expressed their surprise that the government did not consider the voluntary sector as a key partner even when this sector was being asked to deliver public services. The Chair hoped that other local authorities would also bring this issue to the attention of the ODPM. She stated that Harrow Council had always recognised the importance of involving the voluntary sector.

Councillor Lammiman was of the view that the attachment included with the letter ought to reflect that Overview and Scrutiny was not only an internal mechanism but that it extended into the community as well.

AGREED: That the draft response to the ODPM consultation document 'Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future' be approved and submitted to the ODPM before 3 March 2006, subject to the amendment to reflect the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

PN/DP

28. Harrow's Local Area Agreement:

Paul Najsarek (Director of People, Performance and Policy, Harrow Council) tabled a paper, which set out the stretched targets for Harrow's Local Area Agreement (LAA). He explained that the following three key issues had emerged following discussions with the Government Office for London (GOL):-

- that voluntary and Community Sector involvement and engagement with the public in the development of the LAA had been fully met;
- that GOL had expressed concern about the pooling and aligning of resources and that this was the weakest component for Harrow;
- that GOL had expressed concern about Harrow's ability to reach final agreement on the stretched indicators.

Paul Najsarek apologised that the final paper had not been available at the meeting but stated that it required submission to GOL the following day. He sought the Board's agreement to the final paper being compiled by officers and submitted to GOL.

Deborah Palmer (Policy Officer, Harrow Council) confirmed that 75% of the stretched targets would have to be agreed with GOL the following day and reported that the HSP Executive had agreed that the final number of stretched indicators be reduced from 15 to 13. She identified the stretched targets that had been deleted following further negotiations with GOL. She thanked everyone for the work undertaken and for support provided to her on the LAA.

All to note

Deborah Palmer referred to the tabled paper and briefed members on

GOL's views on each of the targets listed in the report. She reported on the long and protracted discussions with GOL that day and indicated that further changes to the stretched targets would be required. Members were informed that at least 9 stretched targets out of the total of 12 would need to be signed off the following day.

Robert Carr (Borough Commander, Harrow Police) referred to the meeting with GOL, which he had attended. He criticised the process and was of the view that targets were being imposed from the centre and that individual local authorities were not being allowed to develop targets suited to local needs. Deborah Palmer commented that targets, which addressed local issues, had been included.

Members expressed concern that the process appeared to go against the spirit of the LAA and agreed that their concerns should be conveyed to GOL separately.

The Board thanked all the partners for their contributions to the work on the Harrow's LAA.

AGREED: That the final paper on Harrow's LAA be compiled by officers and submitted to GOL. PN/DP/RC

29. Final Codes of Conduct for the Compact:

In agreeing the Final Codes of Practice for the Compact, the Board noted that a multi-agency group would meet on 14 March 2006 to discuss Harrow Compact.

AGREED: That the Final Codes of Practice for the Compact be agreed. All members/
JS

30. Update on Membership of the Harrow Strategic Partnership Board:

Bindu Arjoon (Service Manager, Policy and Partnership Section, Harrow Council) introduced the report, which set out the process for the election of the Voluntary and Community Sector Representatives to the Board, the quorum and the representation from the Further Education and Business Sectors.

A Member of the Board expressed some reservation about achieving a quorum set out in the report and suggested an alternative number.

AGREED: That (1) the process of election for the Voluntary and Community Sector representatives as set out in the report be agreed; All members

(2) the quorum be set at four members, to include one representative from four of the following six sectors represented on the Board: the Council, the Harrow Primary Care Trust, the Metropolitan Police, the Business Sector, the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Education Sector; DG/All members

(3) the representation from the Further Education and Business Sectors be noted. All members

31. Any Other Urgent Business:

Service Manager, Policy and Partnership Section, Harrow Council

The Board noted that Bindu Arjoon (Service Manager, Policy and Partnership Section, Harrow Council) was leaving the service of the Council. Members thanked Bindu for the valuable contribution she had made to the work of the Partnership. Joyce Markham (Chief Executive, Harrow Council) stated that the Council would miss Bindu's vast knowledge and her excellent sense of humour.

The Board presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

32. Date of Next Meeting:

Members noted that the next meeting of the Board was scheduled for Wednesday 5 April 2006 at 2.30 pm in Committee Room 4, Harrow Civic Centre. All members

[Note: The Meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.39 pm]