

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**8 JUNE 2005**

Chair: * Councillor Blann

Councillors: * Arnold * John Nickolay (1)
 * Knowles * Mrs R Shah (3)
 * Miles * Anne Whitehead

* Denotes Member present
 (1) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Member

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**156. **Appointment of Chair:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment at the Special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 May 2005, under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 11.2, of Councillor Blann as Chair of this Sub-Committee for the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

157. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Lavingia
 Councillor Seymour

Reserve Member

Councillor Mrs R Shah
 Councillor John Nickolay

158. **Appointment of Vice Chair:**

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Arnold as Vice-Chair of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee for the 2005/2006 Municipal Year.

159. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

160. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda item be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

Agenda item

11. Local Development
 Framework Update

Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency

This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members are requested to consider this item as a matter of urgency.

(2) all items be considered with the press and public present.

161. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That, having been circulated, (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2005, be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- Minute 144 – Annual Work Programme for 2005/06
 Amend the title of the in-depth review to read Parks and Open Spaces

(2) the minutes of the Special meeting held on 19 April 2005 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

162. **Public Questions:**

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

163. **Petitions:**

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

164. **Deputations:**

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

165. **Presentation on Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA):**

The Area Director (Urban Living), together with the Chief Environmental Health Officer and the Waste Manager, gave a presentation on progress with achieving the targets set in the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA).

The LPSA had been agreed by the Council and the Government and reflected a mix of local and national priorities. If all of the targets were reached, the Council would be rewarded a grant equal to 2.5% of the Council's budget, the reward being on a sliding scale down to 60% of the targets achieved being rewarded with a grant of 1.5% of the budget. If the Council did not achieve 60% of the targets, no reward would be granted.

The five areas with LPSA targets within Urban Living were as follows:

Drug Misuse and Treatment

The Chief Environmental Health Officer reported that substantial improvements had been made, mainly due to increased aftercare opportunities, and that the number of drug users who had completed treatment was well over target. Members were advised that initiatives such as post-treatment counselling, automatic referrals of arrested drug users to treatment, reorganisation of the Drug and Alcohol Agency's services and evening drop-in sessions, organised to target hard-to-reach groups, had all contributed to the success.

Reduction in Robberies

The LPSA target referred to reducing robbery in crime hotspots such as the town centre and transport centres. Members were advised that robbery was on the increase nationally and that this had also been the case for Harrow. However, as the police's target this year was to reduce robbery, a decrease in this crime was expected and the figures from the first months of the financial year were supporting this. An information campaign to prevent people being victims of robbery had also been put in place.

Street Scene

Officers reported that although the LPSA targets only referred to South Harrow, the initiatives in that area would be rolled out across the Borough. The Audit Commission would base their CPA rating of the Council on the performance and cleanliness of the whole Borough. Members were further advised that the targets for cleanliness of streets, removal of abandoned cars and removal of illegal advertising had been reached. New initiatives to build on the achievements were being introduced, such as issuing penalties for littering, and parking attendants carrying out additional duties and dealing with littering, untaxed cars and cars obstructing traffic flow.

Officers stressed that Harrow was the third cleanest Borough in London.

Road Safety

It was explained that the target of a reduction to 90 casualties per year had been achieved and significantly surpassed. Four road safety schemes were in place, specifically targeting the areas with high incidents of death or serious injury.

Waste and Recycling

It was reported that, although the Council's achievements were over target on the percentage of household and commercial waste composted/recycled at the CA site, the critical point would be to achieve an overall recycling rate of 25.2% of the household waste in 2005/06, which was the requirement to achieve the LPSA target on waste and recycling. To reach the target the Council was concentrating on completing the roll-out of the Brown Bin Scheme.

It was further explained that Harrow had submitted an expression of interest to become one of the second phase Local Area Agreements (LAA) Authorities in May. The LAA was similar to the LPSA although it emphasised community involvement more than the LPSA.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

166. **Local Development Framework Update:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Strategy (Urban Living) which updated Members on the progress on the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Officers stressed the matter of recruiting and retaining staff to deliver the programme and stated that the Local Development Framework (LDF) was more customer-focused than previous strategies, hence the importance of a dedicated Community Engagement Officer.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the Council's response to suggestions arising from public consultations, officers advised that the new strategy included a more participative approach as the LDF system would require the involvement of the community in the development of the LDF rather than the more limited involvement that took place with the Harrow Unitary Development Plan. There would also be feedback to those who participated in the consultations and did not find their comments had been taken on board.

Officers confirmed that the issue of supplements to staff involved in the LDF would be considered in the future as a method to both recruit and retain staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

167. **Position Statement on Housing Stock Options Appraisal:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Strategy (Urban Living) which provided Members with a progress report on the assessment of the current condition of the housing stock and the different financial options available to the Council in order to achieve the Decent Homes standard by 2010. The report also outlined the extensive consultations with tenants and leaseholders which had been undertaken to ensure their involvement in the process.

In response to a query from a Member about the feedback from consultation events, it was advised that so far this had been very positive and officers offered to circulate the feedback report.

In answer to a question from a Member regarding the consequences of a consultation result contrary to the Council's preferred option, officers replied that a public choice of a non-viable option would indicate that the Council had failed to communicate adequately with the community and that this could lead to further consultations and clarifications.

In response to a query regarding the Council's stock condition survey, officers clarified that the most recent stock condition survey had been carried out in 2003. Officers had, however, recently carried out a small scale survey to inform the Capital Programme and to ensure that work would be carried out on the appropriate properties and estates.

A Member asked that the Sub-Committee receive a breakdown of the costs involved in the Options Appraisal process, particularly in the case of the consultants' fees.

RESOLVED: That (1) a breakdown of the costs of the Options Appraisals process be circulated as an information item to the next meeting; and

(2) the report be noted.

168. **Strategic Performance Report:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Organisational Performance which set out background information about the Strategic Performance reports which were produced quarterly throughout the year. The information in the reports allowed Members to monitor the Council's performance around a number of key objectives. The Sub-Committee was asked to consider additional information to be included in the reports which would then be presented to the Sub-Committee's future meetings.

After a brief discussion the Sub-Committee agreed that the following issues be addressed in the Strategic Performance report:

- only information relevant to the Sub-Committee's area be included;

- the statistics be presented to the Members in colour;
- a glossary of the different BVPIs be displayed along with the percentage required to achieve the targets;
- the total figure for household waste be included;
- the customer satisfaction figures refer only to Urban Living.

In addition to the above items, the Sub-Committee asked that the Strategic Performance report for the next meeting also include an explanation of the scorecard system and their use within the Directorates, and employment and business performance figures so that Members could consider whether these figures should be a regular part of the Strategic Performance report in the future.

RESOLVED: That (1) a further report be made to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee; and

(2) the report be noted.

169. **Review of Public Realm:**

Officers provided the meeting with a verbal update on a matter raised at the Sub-Committee's meeting in March regarding whether to include a review of public realm in the Sub-Committee's Work Programme for 2005/06 or refer this to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had included the item in their work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the above comments be noted.

170. **Preparation for 2005 In-Depth Reviews:**

The meeting considered a report of the Director of Organisational Performance which outlined the various alternatives for undertaking the agreed scrutiny reviews on 'Tourism in Harrow' and 'Parks and Open Spaces'.

After a short discussion, Members agreed to carry out the reviews as follows:

- the two reviews be undertaken concurrently;
- the in-depth review on Tourism include a representative from Agenda 21, the Hospitality Sector, the Harrow Heritage Trust and four Members. The Tourist Officer would also be invited to attend the working group's meeting in an advisory role;
- the in-depth review on Parks and Open Spaces include a representative from a Park Users' Association, the Youth Forum, the Harrow Sports Council and four Members;
- Councillor Blann be the Lead Member for the Tourism review, and other Members on the review include Councillors Miles and John Nickolay;
- Councillor Arnold lead the Parks and Open Spaces review and other Members on the review include Councillors Anne Whitehead and Knowles.

It was agreed that both reviews would include visits to other Boroughs, interviews with officers and sessions with stakeholders. The local press would be informed about the reviews taking place so that the public could contribute with valuable suggestions. The Park and Open Spaces review would also include an open meeting.

The membership of the working groups, the draft scopes and the visits to other Boroughs would be finalised by September. It was suggested that other Members of the Council who were interested in these reviews should be invited to participate. The first draft of reviews would be done in January and the final reports would be presented at the Sub-Committee's March meeting in 2006.

RESOLVED: That (1) the process outlined above be agreed; and

(2) the report be noted.

171. **Rent Arrears and Voids for LA Housing Stock:**
The Sub-Committee considered the information item on Rent Arrears and Voids for the Local Authority Housing Stock and asked that the following amendments be made:

Number of Cases in arrears of eight weeks or more (page 4):

- a definition of 'Housing Officer Patch' be included;
- a column indicating the proportion, as a percentage, of the number of cases in arrears of eight weeks or more compared to the total number of households, be included;
- the average rent compared to the total value of debt be displayed.

Average number of days taken to re-let properties (page 10):

- A more detailed wording for the key be included.
- Exception reports on properties over three months in arrears be included.

In addition, the Sub-Committee asked that the graphs display monthly figures instead of weekly figures and that explanatory notes be included when the statistics displayed sudden changes such as the graph on page 6.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.31 pm, closed at 9.58 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ALAN BLANN
Chair