

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE****29 NOVEMBER 2005**

Chair: \* Councillor Blann

Councillors: \* Arnold \* Miles  
 \* Knowles \* John Nickolay (1)  
 \* Lavingia \* Anne Whitehead

\* Denotes Member present  
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillor O'Dell also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 195 below].

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**188. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that the Chair was notified at the start of the meeting that the following duly appointed Reserve Member would be attending the meeting:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Seymour	Councillor John Nickolay

189. **Declarations of Interest:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
12. Licensing Act 2003 – Completion of Transitional Arrangements and Implementation	Councillor Arnold Councillor Blann Councillor Knowles Councillor John Nickolay	) Member of Licensing ) and General Purposes ) Committee

190. **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:-

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
8. References from Council and Other Committees – Stanmore Multi-Story Car Park	Members were asked to consider this reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 November 2005, which occurred after the agenda had been printed and circulated;

(2) agenda item 10 be considered after item 7 and before item 8;

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

[Note: Subsequently, it was resolved that agenda item 8 be considered at the Special meeting of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee being held on 5 December 2005.]

191. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

192. **Public Questions:**

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

193. **Petitions:**

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

194. **Deputations:**

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

195. **Attendance by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport:**

Members were invited to pose questions to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, who was in attendance at the meeting.

- 1) Has the lack of an Executive Director, and the numerous vacancies as a result of the MMR, affected the service provided by Urban Living and, especially, services to the general public?

Although there had been many changes and much had been achieved over the previous three years, the Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that there was still work to be done within Urban Living in particular, and that he would be working closely with the new Executive Director of Urban Living to ensure that good progress was made on key issues in a timely fashion. Members congratulated Andrew Trehern on his appointment as Executive Director of Urban Living.

The Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that the provision of day-to-day maintenance and protective services had not been adversely affected in this period, and that in fact, significant improvements had been made in areas such as Public Realm Maintenance and Waste Management Services, especially in relation to household waste recycling.

The Portfolio Holder briefed Members on the difficulty the Council had experienced in recruiting professional staff, especially Environmental Health Officers and Engineers. With four appointments in place for some time, Urban Living still had to appoint five Group Managers. The Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that the recruitment exercise would commence in January. Members were informed that, according to current plans, the Urban Living Management Team would be in place on 1 May 2006.

- 2) Will there be any negative consequences for the 2006/7 projects as a result of the delay in getting a decision from Transport for London (TfL) on our Local Implementation Plan?

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council had received positive feedback from TfL, especially in relation to the management of projects for which it provided funding. Members were informed that Borough settlements for 2006/07 would still go ahead provided funding was secured. The Portfolio Holder advised the Sub-Committee that although the Council had bid for schemes that met criteria set by TfL, initiatives were targeted to reflect the priorities and aspirations of the Council and its stakeholders. The Portfolio Holder agreed to provide the Sub-Committee with a note of the various schemes in which the Council participated.

- 3) Are there any significant areas where you see an overspend in the 2005/6 year?

The Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that, on current projections, Urban Living would achieve the agreed outturn target at 31 March 2006.

- 4) What is your overall impression now that the "Clean and Green" is operating throughout the Borough?

The Portfolio Holder stated that the operation of "Clean and Green" throughout the Borough had had a markedly positive impact on public perception and a significant improvement in the quality of services. Moreover, the presence of staff on the street and in parks, seven days per week, was said to have had a

reassuring effect on the public. Members were informed that the development and delivery of all Area Services in a coordinated way throughout the Borough was helping to deliver service improvements and capacity benefits across a range of services, including Community Safety, Infrastructure development and day-to-day maintenance.

- 5) Do you feel that our and the WLWA waste strategy will deliver the reductions in waste to landfill necessary to avoid charges under the Landfill Tax?

The Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that although targets for reduction in waste to landfill sites were challenging, the Council was performing well and looked set to meet them. Members were also informed that Harrow would be one of the few London Boroughs to meet its targets.

- 6) At a recent call-in regarding the traffic restriction options in Howbery Road and Howbery Close it was unanimously agreed to refer the decision back to yourself. It was clear that information provided by officers was flawed and went against the majority of those residents who responded to the consultation papers. Why do you believe that the residents' wishes should not be adhered to, notwithstanding that that is what you have indicated in the Howbery Road consultation?

The Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that the implementation of a yellow line scheme could cause severe inconvenience and disadvantage to residents who had inadequate off-street parking, as they would have to move their vehicle to outside the controlled area during the restricted hour. This would put those residents at a significant disadvantage, especially if they were shift workers or sick, for example. Conversely, if a resident parking scheme were implemented, it would impose no significant disadvantages. Moreover, if residents did not purchase a permit, it would operate in exactly the same manner as a yellow line scheme. The decision therefore took account of the scale of disadvantages for each option, as well as the consultation results.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for his attendance at the meeting, and in response to a request from a Member, the Portfolio Holder agreed that the briefing note in relation to his answers could be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee after the meeting.

196. **Three Valleys Water: Mains Work:**

The Sub-Committee received a presentation by Three Valleys Water, which briefed Members on the mains renewal work undertaken for the period 2005 to 2010. Members were informed that the renewal of the mains distribution network was required to reduce the incidence of burst water mains and leakage in line with OFWAT's performance targets. Work would also offer better management of resources, improved security of supply and customer service, and a reduction in emergency works and disruption. The presentation explained that the particular renewal work undertaken was targeted to achieve the maximum benefit in terms of reducing bursts and leakage; this meant focusing on the mains distribution network, though selected service pipes would also be renewed.

In the section of the presentation allocated to questions, the following points were raised:

- in the case of a burst pipe on private property, it was the water provider's responsibility, and not that of the Council, to address the matter by issuing a Waste Notice and seeking payment from the owner of the property for the water wasted;
- Three Valleys Water offered a 'Leakage Hotline' service to ensure leaks were reported in as timely a fashion as possible;
- the map of the Borough used in the presentation to indicate the location of pipes would be beneficial for other Committees, for example the Traffic Advisory Panel;
- Three Valleys Water liaised closely with the Highways Authority, and would be willing to work proactively with other utilities companies in future renewal works to ensure disruption was kept to a minimum;
- OFWAT had published official guidance to govern increases in water rates.

**RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.

197. **Waste Management (Monitoring of Outcomes of Review):**

The Sub-Committee received an oral report on Waste Management, which provided an update on progress made in implementing the recommendations made by this Sub-Committee to Cabinet on 14 April 2005. The officer present informed Members that the majority of these recommendations had already been implemented, or were in the process of implementation, and that Harrow's recycling targets were currently being exceeded. Leaflets had been distributed to Harrow residents providing information about recycling plastics, and the first collections were due to begin in the week following the meeting. The officer stated that by the end of April 2006, all residents with a green box would be able to participate in the plastic recycling scheme. Members of the Sub-Committee unanimously congratulated all concerned on their hard work and achievements.

**RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.

198. **Licensing Act 2003 - Completion of Transitional Arrangements and Implementation:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Interim Group Manager – Community Safety Services, which provided information on transitional arrangements and implementation of the Licensing Act 2003. Members were informed that of the 495 licensed premises in Harrow, only 6 had still failed to apply for new licenses; it was noted that this compared favourably with neighbouring councils. One of the greatest challenges faced by the Licensing Authority was the need to hear applications within eight weeks of their submission, and the fact that around 45% of premises in Harrow had made applications in the last week of the first Transitional Period. Much of this success was attributed to the work of the Licensing Team, which had included provision of one of the only online application forms in the country. All Members and officers involved were praised by the Sub-Committee for their hard work.

The officer present informed the Sub-Committee that since 24 November 2005, attention had been focused on enforcement, which meant Police and Licensing officers were visiting all potentially problematic premises to ensure compliance with the conditions imposed on their licences. Members were informed that the Council had facilities in which to store confiscated liquor pending court proceedings. The officer also advised the Sub-Committee that the Licensing Team's workload remained high due to the need to process applications for Temporary Event Notices, and predicted an increase in the number of such applications as the benefits that they offered became more widely known. Responding to a question posed by a Member, the officer stated that the Licensing Authority would be in a loss situation next year as a result of the costs incurred by implementing the Licensing Act 2003. The officer also informed the Sub-Committee that at the time of the meeting, there had been one complaint from the public about a licence which had been granted; the Council had already visited the premises in question, and the licence would be called in for Review.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

199. **Parking and Enforcement Policy:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Urban Living, which provided an update on progress made on the implementation of the Best Value Review recommendations and improvement plan. Responding to questions from Members, the officer stated that the return from long-term sickness absence of the Parking Attendants Operations Manager had helped boost morale in the team and improve the quality of service delivery. The fact that both the Parking Enforcement and Parking Attendants services had been brought under the same management had also helped alleviate potential problems that could be caused by future staff absences.

The officer informed the Sub-Committee that there was a protocol used to establish what constituted a minor infringement of the rules governing bus lanes; CCTV footage was available to those contravening these rules, but it was noted that a low 'challenge rate' suggested Enforcement was not deemed unfair by the public.

The officer informed the Sub-Committee that Parking Attendants operated according to percentage bands for different kinds of contravention, to ensure they did not give disproportionate attention to perceived 'soft targets'. The Sub-Committee were also informed that, contrary to a perception that Parking Attendants were allowed to use their own discretion in contested cases, they were in fact instructed to contact their Supervisor for support.

The officer stated that the Best Value Review Recommendations had now been incorporated into the Transport Local Implementation Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

200. **Public Green Spaces Review - Progress Report:**  
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Policy and Performance in this regard.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

201. **Tourism Review - Progress Report:**  
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Policy and Performance on this matter.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

202. **Any Other Business:**  
A Member requested that the data showing rent arrears in the Information Circular be represented as monthly rather than weekly figures.

**RESOLVED:** That the above request be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.00 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ALAN BLANN  
Chair