

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**9 MARCH 2006**

Chair: * Councillor Blann

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

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

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2005/06**

The Sub-Committee received the draft Chair's report of the Sub-Committee's work over the past four years for inclusion in the 2005/06 Scrutiny Annual Report. The Chair of the Sub-Committee proposed that a paragraph be added to the report, noting that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport and the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Housing had attended the meetings of the Sub-Committee held on 29 November 2005 and 5 December 2005 respectively, to answer questions from Members and account for areas of work they dealt with.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (To the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

That (1) the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2005/06 be agreed;

(2) a paragraph be added to the report noting the attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport and the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development at two meetings of the Sub-Committee, to answer questions and account for areas of work they dealt with.

[REASON: To enable the work of the Sub-Committee to be adequately reflected in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report.]

PART II - MINUTES214. **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 Knowles	Councillor John Nickolay

215. **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.216. **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>
12. Decent Homes Capital Programme	This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated due to limited resources within the department as a result of recent staffing issues, holiday commitment at year-end, collating of projected expenditure and agreement of financial information. Members had requested that the report be presented at the March 2006 meeting of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Members were requested to consider this

item as a matter of urgency.

14. Harrow's Local Area Agreement

The report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated as the agreement on which it was based, between Harrow Council and the government, had not been reached until after the agenda had been printed and circulated. At the meeting of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 26 September 2005, Members had received a report on the LAA and requested that a follow-up report be presented at the March 2006 meeting. Members were requested to consider this report as a matter of urgency.

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

217. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 29 November 2005 and 5 December 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

218. **Public Questions:**

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

219. **Petitions:**

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

220. **Deputations:**

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

221. **Scrutiny Communications: Reference from Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2006:**

The Sub-Committee received a reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30 January 2006, which requested Members to provide feedback on a presentation it had received on scrutiny communications. Members were informed that work was ongoing to codify and formalise existing communications practice within the Scrutiny Unit. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Internet had not been used as much as it could have been, and that in the future more documents would be available electronically as PDF files. Members welcomed the improvements detailed in the presentation, and agreed to continue feeding back comments to Scrutiny as it conducted future Reviews.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

222. **Scrutiny Review of Public and Green Spaces - Final Report:**

The Sub-Committee received the Final Report on the Scrutiny Review of Public and Green Spaces, which it had agreed to conduct at its meeting held on 10 March 2005. Members were requested to agree the report and recommendations of the Public Green Spaces Review Group, and to refer them to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report and recommendations of the Public Green Spaces Review Group be agreed;

(2) the report and recommendations be referred to Cabinet; and

(3) the plans for future monitoring of these recommendations, as set out in sections 2.5-2.7 of the officer report, be approved.

223. **Scrutiny Review of Tourism - Final Report:**
The Sub-Committee received the Final Report on the Scrutiny Review of Tourism, which it had agreed to conduct at its meeting held on 10 March 2005. Members were requested to agree the report and recommendations of the Tourism Review Group, refer them to Cabinet, and approve the plans for the future monitoring of these recommendations. It was noted that the Review Group had travelled to Birmingham to see how the city had marketed itself as a centre for tourism, and that the objective of appointing a Tourism officer had already been met.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Tourism be agreed;
- (2) the report and recommendations be referred to Cabinet;
- (3) the plans for the future monitoring of these recommendations, as set out in section 2.5 of the officer report, be approved.
224. **Decent Homes Capital Programme:**
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Urban Living, which provided information on progress against the Capital Programme and Harrow's Decent Homes Programme Initiative. Members were informed that 93.4% of the £8,983,000 total capital available for 2005/06 had been taken up, and that Harrow was on target to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. The officer present also stated that a more strategic use of funding, for example by completing all work required to meet the Decent Homes Standard in a particular property in the least time possible (a process known as 'enveloping'), would ensure more dwellings met the Decent Homes Standard. It was noted that it was unlikely that 100% of homes would reach the Decent Homes Standard, as there was a number of tenants who would not allow the Council to carry out work. Tenants who did not wish such work to be carried out would be able officially to exempt themselves from the Programme, however, which would mean that a figure of 100% could be attained if only tenants who allowed work to be done were accounted for. The Council worked hard to keep tenants informed of the work it would do on dwellings, and aimed to improve energy efficiency where possible.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) an update on progress be presented to the Sub-Committee in the form of an information circular item on a six-monthly basis.
225. **Transport Local Implementation Plan:**
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Urban Living, which provided an update on the preparation of the Transport Local Implementation Plan. Members were informed that the report would go to Cabinet in the week following the meeting, and that if approved, it would be referred to Council in April for final approval, before being submitted to the Mayor of London. The officer present highlighted some of the changes made to the Transport Local Implementation Plan as a result of consultation. This included the possibility of increasing the number of spaces available at station car parks, based on a station-by-station assessment of the impact this would have on the surrounding areas. It was also noted that many of the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee at its Special meeting held on 19 April 2005 had been incorporated into the document.
- RESOLVED:** That the Local Implementation Plan, as revised following the results of the public consultation set out in Appendix 1 to the officer report, be noted.
226. **Harrow's Local Area Agreement:**
The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which detailed progress to date on the development of Harrow's Local Area Agreement. The Director of People, Performance and Policy informed Members that the agreement would come into operation on 1 April 2006, subject to passing the central Government sign-off process in late March 2006. It was noted that Harrow was one of around sixty Local Authorities likely to have a Local Area Agreement, and that the Council had been strongly complemented by the Government on its partnership working. The Director highlighted a number of targets with relevance to the Sub-Committee, which were to reduce the level of Non-Residential burglary in the Borough (Target 5), improving the skills base and the employability of Harrow residents (Target 10), improving the life chances of young people (Target 11), and to change the modal share of journeys to Grimsdyke School away from private cars (Target 12). Members were informed that more innovative areas (such as Target 12, which was still in negotiation at 23 February 2006) were harder to sign-off than areas in which the Council already had a proven record.

RESOLVED: To note (1) the progress to date on the development of the LAA;

(2) that Harrow had submitted its final LAA to GOL and it was in the process of internal sign off with central Government;

(3) that the LAA would come into operation on 1 April 2006.

227. **Effectiveness of Planning Enforcement:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Group Manager of Planning and Development, which provided an update on the effectiveness of Planning Enforcement. The officer highlighted the staff increases since 2003, which, together with the falling number of cases per officer per annum, and quicker turnaround times, meant that the backlog of cases was reducing.

Members were in favour of Building Control surveyors proactively measuring sites, as this had already alerted the Enforcement team to a number of planning permission breaches. Responding to questions from Members, the officer confirmed that homeowners, as well as their builders, were notified of breaches, and that the Council was working to keep agents and builders aware of their responsibilities. The officer informed Members that there were no guidelines as to what constituted a breach, but that this was a matter for the Development Control Committee to decide. It was noted that by comparison, regulations relating to high hedges were clear on what was a reasonable height, although the survey itself was time consuming.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted; and

(2) a follow-up report be presented as an Information Circular item at the March 2007 meeting.

228. **Annual Update on the Waste Management Review:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Urban Living, which reported progress on the changes approved by Cabinet following the Waste Management Review. The officer informed Members that in June 2006, Cabinet would confirm the changeover date of the frequency of Brown Bin collections to weekly, and the green wheelie bin to alternate weeks. It was also noted that officers were appraising the viability of tying street cleaning in with waste collection, as a move towards area working.

Members were informed that the Audit Commission had recommended that the Council increase participation in the Green Box scheme, and that changing the frequency of Brown Bin and green wheelie bin collections would also be a major factor in the attainment of this objective. The officer stated that the delay in ratifying the Joint Waste Strategy had not had a detrimental effect on the Council's waste strategy.

The officer advised that the 5.9% increase in the overall annual waste tonnage between 2001/2 and 2005/6 was reasonable by national standards, and that the 32% increase in Green Box tonnage in the same period was very pleasing. The officer highlighted the fact that the percentage of waste diverted away from landfill had quadrupled between 2001/2 and 2005/6.

Responding to questions from Members, the officer stated that socio-economic factors had a large influence on the level of recycling done in any particular area, and that the Council worked hard to inform the public about recycling through the local press, but also by inspecting the contents of green bins and speaking to residents about their waste disposal where appropriate. The officer confirmed that there were no plans at present to introduce compulsory recycling, as was now the case in boroughs such as Barnet.

RESOLVED: That the progress on implementing the changes agreed by Cabinet in April 2005 be noted.

229. **Parking in Stanmore:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director of Urban Living, which provided an overview and review of parking facilities in Stanmore. The officer informed Members that one of the most significant concerns raised through recent CPZ consultation had been the need to replace the multi-storey car park with another car park.

An adviser to the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel, who was in attendance at the meeting, expressed the view that building dwellings on top of the surface level parking at Stanmore Station as proposed, could result in a reduction in the number of spaces available, which meant that a two-level car park could be preferable. It was

noted, however, that this solution could also have negative consequences for local residents, which would need to be considered when weighing up the different options.

In response to questions from Members, the officer confirmed that the £100,000 contributory funding secured from the developers of Wembley Stadium through Brent Council was to be spent at the discretion of Harrow Council, subject to approval by Members. Since developers would only fund those feasibility studies that resulted in schemes being implemented, the officer stressed the need to address only those areas where there were real community concerns. The officer confirmed that a match day parking scheme in Stanmore had been agreed for investigation, and that if residents expressed an interest in adopting a similar scheme in Canons Park, this would be considered. It was also noted that, besides parking restrictions, other solutions should be considered to manage the situation, such as encouraging schools to make spaces available for a charge on match days.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee proposed that a follow-up review be presented to the Sub-Committee in September 2006 in the form of an Information Circular item.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted; and

(2) a follow-up review be presented to the September 2006 meeting of the Sub-Committee in the form of an Information Circular item.

230. **Any Other Business:**

The Chair expressed his gratitude to the Scrutiny Officer, the Democratic Services Officer, the Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee, and the Sub-Committee as a whole, for all their hard work. Members agreed that the Sub-Committee had done much work scrutinising and supporting the Executive.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.33 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ALAN BLANN
Chair