

**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
SUB-COMMITTEE****23 MARCH 2006**

Chair: * Councillor Thammaiah

Councillors: Dharmarajah * Vina Mithani
* Ann Groves * Osborn (1)
* Lavingia * Seymour* Denotes Member present
(1) Denotes category of Reserve Member**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS****RECOMMENDATION 1 - Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which sought approval of the Chair's report on the Sub-Committee's work over the past four years for inclusion in the 2005/06 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report.

The Sub-Committee commended the report and

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

That (1) the Chair's report on the work of the Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee be agreed;

(2) a line be added to the introduction of the report to note that the Sub-Committee had considered crime and disorder reduction on a regular basis; and

(3) the headings relating to the Sub-Committee's work on post-offices and the Reducing Fear of Crime review appear in bold type in order to highlight the importance of these pieces of work.

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

(See also Minute 205).

PART II - MINUTES196. **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 Janet Cowan	Councillor Osborn

197. **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.

198. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda items 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>
11. Reducing the Fear of Crime Scrutiny Review	This report was not available when the main agenda went to print as consultation on the recommendations was still in progress. The Sub-Committee was requested to consider the report in order to enable it to be referred to the Safer Harrow Management Group and Cabinet.

12. Crime and Disorder Act Review Recommendations The appendices to this report had been inadvertently omitted from the main agenda.

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

199. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2006, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

200. **Public Questions:**

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

201. **Petitions:**

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

202. **Deputations:**

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

203. **Scrutiny Communications: Reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 30 January 2006:**

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on Scrutiny Communications from an officer from the Scrutiny unit, which provided an update on progress made regarding communications as well as proposals for further development. The Sub-Committee also received a reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30 January 2006, which requested the Sub-Committee to provide feedback on the presentation.

An officer advised that it was anticipated that a similar project would be undertaken in future to inform officers of Members' needs. The project would probably be implemented by autumn after the work programme had been finalised and would be linked to the annual reporting process.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the presentation of information on the internet, the officer advised that there was currently a page for each committee and that the terms of reference for committees would also be displayed. However, work was being undertaken to develop further pages to enable website users to view information on Scrutiny thematically, rather than requiring knowledge of the structure of Scrutiny. The Sub-Committee was advised that emphasis would therefore be placed on detailing how the public could get involved and engage better with Scrutiny.

Members commented that:

- the project was important, as many people were not aware of the role of Scrutiny;
- it was important to ensure that members of the public who did not have access to the internet would be able to access the information via Harrow People and local papers;
- Members should be aware of the work of other Sub-Committees, as there were many crosscutting issues. It was felt that the Members' newsletter should be a regular item and that it should be available in both hard copy format and on the intranet;
- Harrow People should be used to publicise Scrutiny's function. A general article on Scrutiny followed by an article on a Sub-Committee, with subsequent articles focusing on different Sub-Committees, was suggested. Members highlighted the importance of the information being easy to read and succinct, and suggested it be produced in a supplement.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

204. **Harrow Strategic Partnership Scorecard:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which provided an update on the work undertaken to develop performance management arrangements within the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP).

An officer advised that the Local Area Agreements (LAA) had just been agreed. He emphasised that performance management had been a priority for approximately a year and that there was a desire to see a greater sharing of information between partners and increased accountability.

The officer advised the Sub-Committee that:

- the Chair of the HSP working group, Andrew Morgan, was from outside the Council. Members commented that this was positive;
- the questionnaire included in the report had been circulated the preceding week;
- initial performance reporting would be put in place to report on the LAA in a balanced scorecard. This would then be extended to areas of the community strategy not presently covered by the LAA. In the future there would be a scorecard for each management group and they would be similar in appearance to the Council's strategic performance reports; and
- the next step would be to consider what other areas should be measured.

A Member commented that the HSP was not understood by many Members as well as members of the public. In response to a request for performance measures to include the degree of recognition attributed to the HSP, the officer advised that a quality of life survey was about to be re-commissioned by the HSP. Questions relating to the extent to which the HSP was recognised could be included in the survey and the response fed into the scorecard. A Member commented that Scrutiny could also consider this issue.

Members commented that it was important to keep the monitoring system as simple as possible, and to show the link between Council, its partners and Scrutiny.

In response to a Member's query regarding the process if an area was found to be performing poorly, it was advised that opportunities for following up on poor performance had been enhanced by the LAA, as for the first time there would be a sum of money at stake dependant on performance. The LAA should be worth £6.5 million, which included money that was allocated in advance and reward money that would be allocated if targets were met. The officer advised that primary indicators were the initial source of information for performance data.

During the discussion on the report, the following issues were raised:

- a Member highlighted that it would be important for different agencies including the Local Authority and the police to work together;
- an officer commented that the Crime and Justice Bill would increase the role of Scrutiny and scorecards would be needed;
- in response to a Member's comment that there was a need to publicise the LAA and that many elected Members did not appreciate its significance, the Sub-Committee was advised that a press release would be sent out the following day.

The Chair requested that the Sub-Committee be kept updated of progress relevant to the HSP.

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

(2) the Sub-Committee be kept updated of progress relating to the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP).

205. **Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

Further to Recommendation 1 above, the Sub-Committee discussed the Chair's draft report further. In response to a query from a Member in relation to the information provided under the sub-heading 'statutory obligations' on page 3 of the officer report, and on what link there would be between the Safer Harrow Management Group and Scrutiny to enable feedback from Scrutiny to reach the Group, an officer advised as follows:

- under the provisions of the Police and Justice bill, if enacted, the Sub-Committee would be able to hold the Safer Harrow Management Group to account and partners would be required to respond to recommendations from scrutiny and report back on action taken or the reasons for not acting;
- the development of performance management arrangements for the Safer Harrow Management Group could be reported to the Sub-Committee;
- there was potential for the co-option of a non-voting advisor to the Sub-Committee to support scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

Members discussed the possibility of co-opting a member of the Safer Harrow Management Group on to the Sub-Committee. The officer suggested someone in a community safety role such as the Head of Community Safety.

Members commented that:

- In the past, departmental officer support had been provided on an ad-hoc basis and an appointed non-voting advisor would enable continuity.
- It would be helpful if regular reports from the Safer Harrow Management Group or the minutes of the Group's meetings were included on the Sub-Committee's agenda.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

206. **Reducing Fear of Crime Scrutiny Review:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which detailed the recommendations of the scrutiny review group on reducing the fear of crime in Harrow.

An officer advised that consultation on the report had been undertaken with the police, chief officers and Portfolio Holders. Many constructive comments had been received and, as a result, the Chair was proposing that the Sub-Committee agree a number of amendments to the report.

Members considered the report to be positive and accepted the amendments detailed in the covering report.

Members requested that the new Recommendation 13 be amended to convey the Sub-Committee's support for improved staffing at railway stations. This was felt to be important as crime was still taking place at stations despite the presence of CCTV at many of them, and it was considered to be important to have staff available to monitor CCTV footage as well as a physical presence at stations.

In response to a Member's query regarding the process once the Sub-Committee had made its recommendation to Cabinet, the officer advised that it was her understanding that an action plan would come back to the Sub-Committee for consideration at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report of the Scrutiny Review Group be approved;

(2) the amendments to the recommendations as agreed by the Chair of the Review Group, arising from consultation subsequent to the agreement of the report by the Review Group, be approved;

(3) the report be referred to Cabinet and the Safer Harrow Management Group;

(4) the publication and dissemination of the report be agreed; and

(5) officers be requested to provide a report on progress in 2006/07.

[REASON: To provide Cabinet with the opportunity to influence the development of future approaches for tackling Fear of Crime]

207. **Crime and Disorder Act Review Recommendations:**

An officer introduced a report of the Head of Community Safety Services, which advised the Sub-Committee of the probable implications for Scrutiny arising from the implementation of recommendations attached to the Crime and Disorder Act Review.

The officer advised that the role of Scrutiny would increase to include scrutinising external agencies if the Police and Justice Bill was passed by Parliament. He advised that Members would be required to actively deal with and champion issues within their wards. This marked a change for all Members and not only for those involved with Scrutiny as it placed a responsibility upon them to ensure that the issues identified were pursued and dealt with. Where issues could not be resolved on a local basis, Local Authority Scrutiny Committees would be required to look at these cases where a broader response would be required, to identify key issues and to ensure action was taken.

The Sub-Committee was referred to page 65 of the report and advised that the changes in relation to delivery would mean that Scrutiny would be able to monitor both six monthly and annual reviews and strategies. The officer also advised that amongst all the partner agencies, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be the body expected to ensure that appropriate action had been taken by local agencies.

In response to a Member's query regarding funding for the proposals, the officer advised that the cost of proposals was difficult to estimate. However, a targeted audit including hard to reach groups and the requirement for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) to undertake strategic assessments at least every six months could cost a significant amount of money. On all previous occasions the formal audits had been funded via the Home Office but the position for future audits was not known at this time.

The officer clarified that the proposals meant that where individual Members had been unable to resolve a particular issue, there would be a process for them to raise the issue via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In response to some Members expressing their concern over the possibility of a legal challenge due to obligations being placed upon them, the officer advised that training would be provided for Members, and that they would be supported if required to engage directly with the public. A Member emphasised that he considered it important that support be provided in addition to training, as well as clear practical guidance with examples of key potential cases. The officer advised that if a resident were not satisfied with an outcome, he could refer the matter to the Executive of Council and that the Member could be investigated, but the subsequent process had yet to be determined.

Members commented that responsibilities would be divided between the three Members in each ward, and that the distinction between Scrutiny and the Executive appeared unclear.

The officer concluded that he viewed the possible changes as positive and that Members would have the opportunity to obtain an insight into issues, which would help inform their perceptions. He emphasised that the changes were currently at an early stage but it was expected that new legislation would probably be passed by the summer.

RESOLVED: That the probable implications for Scrutiny arising from the implementation of the recommendations attached to the Crime and Disorder Act Review be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.33 pm, closed at 9.37 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR KEEKIRA THAMMAIAH
Chair