
REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2006

Chairman: * Councillor Jean Lammiman

Councillors: * B E Gate * Jerry Miles
* Mitzi Green Christopher Noyce
* Julia Merison (2) * Mrs Rekha Shah
* Salim Miah * Mark Versallion
* Mrs Myra Michael * Jeremy Zeid (5)

* Denotes Member present
(2) and (5) Denote category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillor Paul Scott also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 39 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION I - Scrutiny Discussion Forum**

Members considered a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which set out proposals for an online discussion forum for scrutiny Members. The forum would be a web-based service that would allow Members to put questions, exchange ideas and share information. Harrow's forum would be based on the Council's intranet site and the establishment costs would be met from existing budgets. Users would be expected to abide by a 'use' policy.

In agreeing the establishment of the scrutiny discussion forum, which would initially be piloted for a period of three months, the Committee, inter alia,

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That (1) the establishment of an online forum for the development of scrutiny activity in Harrow be noted, and that

(2) access to the scrutiny online discussion forum be restricted to non-executive Members* and officers within the scrutiny team.

**[Note: The forum will not be available to the Executive Members and their support Members.]*

(See also Minute 47).

PART II - MINUTES**30. Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Richard Romain Councillor Anthony Seymour	Councillor Jeremy Zeid Councillor Julia Merison

31. Declarations of Interest:

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

- (i) Agenda Item 18 - Scrutiny Work Programme
Councillor Mitzi Green declared a personal interest in that her adult son, who had a learning disability, received support from Harrow Learning Disabilities Team and Housing Benefits. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.
- (ii) Agenda Item 19 – Business Continuity Management Update
During consideration of this item, Councillor Mark Versallion declared a personal interest in that he owned a business in Harrow. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.
- (iii) Agenda Items 13 and 23 - Business Transformation Partnership
During consideration of this item, Councillor B E Gate declared a personal interest due to his professional interest in call centres. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

32. Arrangement of Agenda:

The Chairman stated that Item 18 - Scrutiny Work Programme – would be considered before Item 17 – Scopes for Scrutiny Reviews. During the course of the meeting, the order of business was further varied and the minutes are recorded in the order items on the agenda were considered.

RESOLVED: That business be considered with the press and public present with the exception of the following item for the reason set out below:-

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Reason</u>
23. Business Transformation Partnership	The report contained exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) in that it contained information in relation to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

33. Minutes:

RESOLVED: That (1) the minutes of the special meeting held on 5 June 2006 be taken as read and signed as a correct record;

(2) the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 18 July 2006 be deferred until printed in the Council Bound Minute Volume.

34. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 8, 9 and 10 (Part 4F of the Council's Constitution) respectively.

35. Appointment of Members to the Scrutiny Sub-Committees for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2006/07:

RESOLVED: To note that the appointments to the Scrutiny Sub-Committees would be considered at the next ordinary meeting of the Committee.

36. **Reports from Other Committees:**

RESOLVED: To note that no reports were received.

37. **Financial Position - Item placed on the agenda at the request of a Member of the Committee and Medium Term Business Strategy:**

The Chairman stated that the two reports were linked and would be considered together. She advised that the Portfolio Holder for Business Development and the Leader had been unable to attend the meeting to respond to questions from Members as they were both indisposed and had sent their apologies. However, the Leader had provided written responses to the questions together with a briefing note on the financial position, both of which were circulated at the meeting.

The officer introduced the reports which set out:-

- (i) the poor financial position of the Council, the position on the reserves, the level of savings required and how these would be achieved;
- (ii) the context for the next medium term budget strategy (MTBS), the current funding gap, some prepared budget principles, an update on the five strategic saving projects and the next steps.

She alluded to the reports and responded to questions from Members as follows:-

- it was important to note that Council Tax accounted for only 18% of the Council's gross funding;
- savings from the organisational structure review had been built into the MTBS;
- value for money exercises had been undertaken and the costs and performance of Harrow had been compared with all the London boroughs, neighbouring boroughs and those boroughs that had achieved a three-star rating;
- all comparisons had shown that Harrow was a low spending but high Council Tax authority and that this was due to the low level of grant funding received by the Council;
- the Council would receive a grant of 2.7% during 2007/08 and that the grant assumption of 2% had been made in the MTBS for 2008/09 and 2009/2010;
- the situation on the level of grant received would be investigated and it was hoped that appropriate representations could be made to the relevant Minister.

The Chairman stated that the Harrow Vitality Profiles would support the Council's case for a higher grant than currently received. A Member was of the view that historical data was important as former administrations in Harrow might have set low parameters which continued to impact on the grant received. He suggested that officers ought to investigate this issue.

The Chairman proposed a way forward in relation to the written questions. Concern was expressed that Executive Members had not been able to attend the meeting(s) of the Committee and that it was incumbent on all Scrutiny Members to ensure that important issues were brought to the Scrutiny Committees for consideration. Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That (1) in the absence of the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Business Development (Deputy Leader of the Council), the questions – including a written supplemental question provided at the meeting – and written answers circulated at the meeting, together with the reports of the Director of Financial and Business Strategy, be deferred to the special meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 14 November 2006 when the Leader and the Acting Chief Executive would be in attendance and the Portfolio Holder for Business Development also would be invited to attend;

(2) it be noted that the special meeting on 14 November 2006 would consider questions on the following matters:-

- Delivering the Corporate Strategy
- Budget/Financial Issues
- Access Harrow

- Acting Chief Executive's priorities.

38. **Action in response to Scrutiny Review of the Middle Management Review:**

The Director of People, Performance and Policy introduced the report, which set out the action taken by the Council in response to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review of the Council's Middle Management Review (MMR).

The Director responded to questions from Members and highlighted the following points:-

- lessons learnt from the MMR process had been applied to the Business Transformation Partnership (BTP) process which had been delivered on time, within budget and in consultation with the Unions;
- systems for the use of external consultants had been strengthened following concern expressed by the Committee and that the process now allowed the use of consultants to be challenged by the Council's procurement team prior to their appointment;
- the arm's length approach to the management of the consultants had been replaced by a robust managerial structure to ensure accountability;
- consultants were appointed following a competitive process;
- the MMR was complete and that 17 members of staff had been displaced and redundancy might be the end process for those individuals;
- three months' notice had been given to staff who had not been redeployed or taken up temporary assignments;
- an overall saving of £0.7m had been achieved in the salaries budget. However not all the savings were as a result of the MMR process.

A Member of the Committee, who had led on the Scrutiny review of the MMR, commented that he was generally pleased with the actions taken. Members were informed by an officer that it had been a strategic decision to launch the Management Information System (MIS) later than anticipated, as an analysis of the risks involved had shown that more testing was required, thereby ensuring credibility of the system.

There was consensus that a glossary of terms used ought to be provided on all future reports, following which it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy be noted;

(2) the Director of People, Performance and Policy be requested to submit a report on the Middle Management Review to the 29 January 2007 meeting of the Committee, which would focus on human resources issues.

39. **Business Transformation Partnership:**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Business Transformation, which provided an update on the performance of the Business Transformation Partnership (BTP), its early projects and issues together with the developments in Harrow Information Technology Services (HITS) in relation to its transformation plan. A confidential report on the BTP, which contained financial information in relation to the contract, had been circulated with the agenda.

Representatives from Capita and the consultant appointed to programme manage the BTP introduced their relevant sections of the reports and highlighted the achievements and identified areas where improvements were required, such as the One Stop Shop and the Call Centre. They highlighted the need to stabilise the projects that had been launched and the importance of optimising the use of the systems launched. An action plan had been agreed to resolve the issues around the safety of the site(s) and the Committee was advised that the implementation would be overseen by appropriate officers and inspected by the Executive Director (Urban Living).

The representatives responded to numerous questions from Members on:-

- the opening hours of the Call Centre/One Stop Shop
- performance management and training provided to staff;

- application of best practice;
- revision of policies;
- the length of time taken to answer telephone calls which, in some instances, was unacceptable;
- customer care issues/relationships;
- methods for transactions;
- payments to the contractor;
- the support provided by Harrow Information Technology Service (HITS) to the BTP process;
- the outcome of the Middle Management Review (MMR) process in HITS;
- service desk problems experienced by HITS;
- the refreshment of the Council's website and the management of any slippage.

It was noted that the customer satisfaction survey carried out in relation to the One Stop Shop had been positive.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the reports be noted;

(2) a report be submitted to the next ordinary meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 21 November 2006 covering the following issues relating to Access Harrow and how these would be addressed:

- performance/stress management and training;
- extension of opening hours of the One Stop Shop/Call Centre;
- consideration of a review of the waiting area/entrance and exit points to ensure that the First Contact Centre was 'welcoming';
- extension of CCTV;
- issues raised by a Member in relation to telephone numbers provided, trends and improvements, details of which would be agreed separately with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman outside of the meeting.

(See also Minute 31(iii)).

40. **Business Continuity Management Update:**

Members considered the report of the Director of Financial and Business Strategy, which set out details of the current position of business continuity management across the Council and the promotion of Business Continuity generally to small and medium size enterprises in the Borough. An officer highlighted the pertinent points in the report and responded to questions from Members.

The officer reported that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 placed a duty on Councils to implement a business continuity management process within the Council and promote Business Continuity. The work being done in Harrow would be contained within existing budgets and workshops had been delivered to assist managers to write their Critical Service Assessments for their service areas. Businesses would be leafleted and guidance would be carried out within the provisions of the Act. In addition, Harrow Information Technology Service (HITS) would be taking steps to build resilience and were examining devices to reduce risks and 'clutters'. Information on the steps taken to remedy risks would be provided to Members by HITS.

The Officer stated that some of the issues raised by Members in relation to provision of reception centres and arrangements with the police/armed forces in an emergency were the remit of the Emergency Planning Officer. She added that the Council had a Major Incident Plan in place and there were currently 8 reception centres and that the Council would be 'building' on this. She also explained that 'Exercise Adelaide' undertaken in June 2006 was an exercise that had involved the Police, Ambulance

Services, Fire Service and other category 1 responders and the plan had been tested as part of this. Each Directorate had its own Emergency Plan. Members were informed that the Emergency Planning Officer would be requested to address the issues raised above, including the actions being taken to mitigate losses to residents.

RESOLVED: That the current position with regard to Business Continuity Management within the Council and the promotion of business continuity generally to local small and medium sized enterprises be noted.

(See also Minute 31(ii)).

41. **Progress Report following Recommendation of the HSE Inspection January 2005:**

Members considered the report of the Director of Financial and Business Strategy, which set out the activities undertaken to meet the recommendations in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) inspection report of January 2005, including the development of a health and safety scorecard to monitor performance to ensure good management.

An officer identified some of the key work done which had benefited from the 'top-down' approach taken by the Council. He informed Members that occupational health illness was an issue and that a 'well-being' group (Health at Work Group) had been set up to co-ordinate effectively the future direction of health at work.

The officer responded to questions from Members in relation to training and how this was being delivered to employees, the powers of the HSE and plans to train Members. The Director of People, Performance and Policy undertook to take the training of Members forward and to address the issue of whether or not the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 placed a legal duty on Members and the resultant implications.

RESOLVED: That (1) the progress made with respect to meeting the HSE inspection of January 2005 recommendation be noted;

(2) 'exception' reports be submitted to the Committee and that a report on the Health at Work Group be submitted to the January 2007 meeting of the Committee.

42. **Corporate Assessment Challenge Panel:**

The Director of People, Performance and Policy presented his report, which set out the findings of the Challenge Panel set up to consider the Council's draft self-assessment for the forthcoming corporate assessment. He stated that the Challenge Panel had been constructive, valuable and that it had engaged with officers and partners.

A Member, speaking in his capacity as the Chairman of the Challenge Panel, thanked officers and partners for their contributions and recommended that its principles be applied elsewhere.

The Chairman stated that the Challenge Panel had been helpful and added that it had been refreshing to challenge our Partners and for them to challenge the Council. She thanked all those who had participated.

RESOLVED: That (1) the findings of the Challenge Panel be noted;

(2) the recommendations included in the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy be endorsed.

43. **Consultation Draft of the Refreshed Community Plan:**

Members considered the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which invited comments on the refreshed Community Plan by 27 October 2006.

An officer reported that the Community Plan had been split into three sections: Vision, Medium Ambitions and the Three Year Action Plan. Consultation would take place on the first two sections only. The Committee was briefed on the extensive distribution of the Plan.

In response to questions from Members, the officer stated that:-

- the Community Plan embraced the Children and Young People's Plan and the Community Safety Strategy in one place;
- the remarks from Members, set out below, would be included as comments in the Community Plan:

- to let youngsters organise themselves (Young Harrow)
- need to be cohesive (Stronger Communities in Harrow);
- he would work with the Scrutiny Manager to take on board outcomes of scrutiny reviews - Fear of Crime, Social Inclusion – which might help ‘inform’ the Plan better;
- the purpose of the MORI survey was not qualitative; however future surveys would be made equitable;
- the refreshed website might help to engage the young and boost on-line responses generally.

A Member suggested that the Portfolio Holder for Community Equality and the relevant officer be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the comments detailed in the preamble above be taken on board.

44. **Procurement Update:**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Financial and Business Strategy, which provided a general overview of procurement activity in 2006/07, as requested by the Committee.

An officer introduced the report and summarised its key points.

The Chairman stated that the Committee’s concerns related to the effectiveness of the procurement process and whether the procurement plan was achieving savings at the right time.

Officers responded to questions from Members and commented on the benefits of shared working. Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) a Member be provided with details on the initiative to reduce the number of printers/photocopiers which will result in a saving to the Council;

(3) examples of successful outcomes and tendering processes as a result of joint working with Capita and the Capita proposal for the Procurement Team structure be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

(4) social care procurement procedures be submitted to the Adult Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

45. **Scrutiny Work Programme:**

Members received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which proposed the scrutiny work programme for 2006/10. An officer introduced the report and reported on the methodologies that could be used to deliver the programme.

It was noted that some of the following projects had been established, of which some had been completed:-

- Budget Challenge Panel (ongoing)
(Councillor Christopher Noyce to chair the group. Councillors Salim Miah and Mark Versallion to join the group. Labour Members to notify their representatives).
- NHS Review (ongoing)
(Councillor Mrs Myra Michael to chair the group).
- Procurement (to be added to the Work Programme)
(Councillor Richard Romain (or Councillor Jeremy Zeid) to co-lead the group. Councillor Jean Lammiman to join the group).
- Culture Programme (to be set up)
(Councillor Mitzi Green to chair. Councillor Lammiman to join the group. To note that Councillor Bill Stephenson had expressed an interest in joining this group).
- Olympics Programme (to be set up)

- Investors in People (to be set up)
(Councillor Jean Lammiman to chair this group. Councillor Julia Merison to join the group)
- Human Resources Programme (for 2007/08)
- Local Area Agreement (LAA) (unnecessary)
- Review on the Impact of Savings on Services (to be programmed)

RESOLVED: That (1) subject to the preamble above, the proposed work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, attached as Appendix One to the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, be agreed;

(2) the work programmes for the Safer and Stronger Communities and Sustainable Development and Enterprise Sub Committees, attached as Appendices Two and Three respectively to the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, be noted;

(3) the full list of agenda items for the scrutiny committees, attached as Appendix Four to the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, be noted;

(4) the work programmes for the Children and Young People and Adult Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committees be submitted to Committee in November 2006;

(5) that the work programme be submitted either to the December 2006 Extraordinary Council (providing it was procedurally acceptable) or February 2007 Council meeting;

(6) Councillors Christopher Noyce and Jean Lammiman chair the Budget and Investor in People Challenge Panels respectively and that Councillor Mitzi Green chair the Procurement Review Programme;

(7) a working group be set up to consider the Cultural Services Inspection Improvement Plan.

(See also Minute 31(i)).

46. **Scopes for Scrutiny Reviews:**

An officer introduced the report, which introduced scopes for the summer/autumn scrutiny reviews and which had been agreed as part of the Overview and Scrutiny committee's work programme for 2006-10. It also identified some of the methodological changes that had been introduced since the election in May 2006. It was noted that a full evaluation of these new methodologies would be reported to the January 2007 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That (1) the scopes for each of the following reviews be agreed:-

- Standing Scrutiny Review of NHS Finances (Overview and Scrutiny);
- Budget Challenge Panel;
- Investor In People Challenge Panel.

(2) the scope for the Corporate Assessment Challenge Panel, which was undertaken in September 2006, be noted.

47. **Scrutiny Discussion Forum:**

Further to Recommendation I above, a Member highlighted the need to tighten up the 'use' policy – rule 4. In response, the Chairman stated that this issue would be revisited after the pilot. She undertook to provide examples of 'acceptable language'.

RESOLVED: That (1) a scrutiny discussion forum be established;

(2) the forum be structured around the headings of scrutiny processes, scrutiny projects and scrutiny committees;

(3) subject to the comments made in the preamble above, the attached draft acceptable 'use' policy attached at Appendix A to the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, for the scrutiny online forum be agreed;

(4) the forum be piloted for a period of three months and that an interim report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress at that stage;

(5) users of the forum be set up with login details and passwords.

48. **Business Transformation Partnership:**

See Minute 39.

49. **Extension and Termination of the Meeting:**

In accordance with the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6.6 (ii)(b), it was

RESOLVED: (1) At 10.00 pm to continue until 10.30 pm;

(2) at 10.30 pm to continue until 10.45 pm;

(3) at 10.45 pm to continue until 11.00 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.56 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JEAN LAMMIMAN
Chairman