

**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**
28 SEPTEMBER 2006

Chairman: * Councillor Anthony Seymour

 Councillors: * Robert Benson * Stanley Sheinwald
 * G Chowdhury * Mrs Sasi Suresh
 * Dhirajlal Lavingia (1) * Keeki Thammaiah

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

[Note: Councillors Mrs Kinnear and Susan Hall attended to speak on the item indicated at Minute 23].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL
PART II - MINUTES

 16. **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 Mano Dharmarajah	Councillor Dhirajlal Lavingia

 17. **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.

 18. **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>
10. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act	The report was received late as a result of the need for further consultation with Members on the report of the challenge panel. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency, to enable Members to agree the report and to make a timely contribution to the Council's preparations for Corporate Assessment.
14. Terms of Reference	Proposed amendments to the Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference had not been finalised at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency, in order to avail themselves of the revised Terms of Reference agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

 19. **Minutes:**
RESOLVED: That the consideration and signing of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2006, be deferred until printed in the next Council Bound Minute Volume.

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

21. **Petitions:**

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

22. **Deputations:**

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

23. **Questions and Answers with Portfolio Holder for Urban Living (Public Realm):**

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Urban Living (Public Realm) to the meeting. The Chairman invited Members to put their questions to the Portfolio Holder and stated that they could also ask supplemental questions.

Recycling and waste

Question 1: *What progress has been made on increasing the level of recycling?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the level of recycling had increased from 26.7% to 30% this year, green box recycling had increased by 23% and the amount of plastic bottles and cans being recycled had trebled. There had also been an increase in organic recycling but the level of contamination was high, and brown bin tonnage had increased by 17% on last year. It was reported that the government had set a recycling target for Harrow of 40% by 2009/10 and that Harrow's level of recycling was the ninth highest London Borough.

In response to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that anyone who had placed an order for an additional green box would have it supplied. A Member responded that not all residents were aware they had to place an order and the Portfolio Holder requested that she be given the details of these individuals.

Question 2: *What lessons have been learned from recent changes to recycling that will be implemented when collections are changed in October?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that in July 2006, there had been a change in the frequency of collections and compulsory recycling had started (except for flats) across the whole of the Borough. The lesson that had been learned from this was that the implementation of changes should be phased in. In response to a supplementary question about improvements, the Portfolio Holder requested that if any incidents were reported to Members, she should be informed so that they could be investigated.

Question 3: *What plans are there for extending recycling to items that are currently going to landfill?*

The Portfolio Holder explained that the materials recycled would depend on the markets available but that drink cartons and all cardboard would probably be included. However, Harrow was close to reaching the maximum that could be diverted from landfill. She reported that Cabinet would be considering changes, including all recycled material being collected and sorted later to save time at the kerbside, and also the possible introduction of a blue box with the capacity of five green boxes.

In response to a supplementary question about where collected rubbish was taken, the Portfolio Holder explained that organic material was taken to Harefield and the rest was taken to the Civic Amenity Site.

Question 4: *How is the Council going to implement compulsory recycling in blocks of flats as anybody can put their rubbish into the flats' bins?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that there were no plans to extend compulsory recycling to flats as this would pose significant challenges as there was a lower level of personal responsibility. However 1,500 out of 19,000 flats had on-site recycling facilities and this figure would be improved.

A Member informed the Portfolio Holder that some flats had bins at the end of their drives and this was noted by the Portfolio Holder.

Question 5: *What support is in place to support elderly or disabled residents who find it difficult to leave bins near the edge of their property?*

The Portfolio Holder explained that an assisted collection scheme operated for those unable to manage bins and that demand for this service had been increasing. Some residents were being advised to use waste bins instead of their regular bins and that these would be collected by operatives.

Community safety

Question 6: *How is the Council assessing the impact of the introduction of third party reporting? Has it increased reporting so far?*

It was explained that there were 47 reports currently within the system including a significant number which had been carried over from previous systems or reported again through the system. Only 3 of these had been passed to the police for further investigation as potential offences and this figure was not above average for the period of time. The system was currently very new and it would not be possible to accurately predict reporting levels with confidence until it had been operating for at least 6 months. However it was critical in terms of the fact that some of the cases may not have been reported before the introduction of third party reporting and complainants were able to access reporting in their own communities and be referred to the agency of their choice. A multi-language initiative had also been started to enable all people to access the service.

Officers reported that third party reporting was started as it was recognised that Harrow had low reporting levels compared with high ethnic diversity in the resident population and that many people would not report to formal organisations without the system in place. This is why the reporting sites were in 11 community sites across Harrow and delivered by members of local communities for their own communities.

Cycling

Question 7: *What can the Council do to prevent parking on cycle lanes?*

The Portfolio Holder explained that there were two types of cycle lanes: advisory and mandatory, and that only mandatory ones could be enforced through Traffic Orders. The Council had decided to have advisory cycle lanes and prioritise joining up a network of cycle lanes. This would lead to more usage of cycle lanes and subsequently to a greater need for making the cycle lanes mandatory.

Street Lighting

Question 8: *What progress has been made regarding the PFI? How will the Council progress improvements if the bid is unsuccessful?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the Council had submitted an expression of interest to the Department of Transport, which had awarded the Council PFI credits and asked them to submit a business case. It was acknowledged that the associated costs would be high. In response to a supplementary question about the fear of insufficient lighting, the Portfolio Holder reported that this matter would be considered during discussions.

Parks and Open Spaces

Question 9: *Did the Portfolio Holder liaise with the police and community groups before the decision was made to keep parks open at night, and what consultation plans does the Portfolio Holder have in the future for this?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that Members would be provided with a written response as this question had been submitted late and not all the required information was available. However she commented that there were plans to consult park users.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for her responses.

The Sub-Committee considered the information provided in the appendices circulated with the agenda, in particular, the Strategic Performance Report – Quarter 1, 2006/07 and noted that many of the performance indicators were 'green'. Members requested further information from officers on the reasons some of the 'improve community safety' performance indicators were 'red'. An officer explained that robberies were now recorded differently, increasing the metrics of recording, and that identified prolific offenders who were responsible for the increased numbers, were being targeted. However, Harrow had the second lowest robbery rate in London and, overall, it had the lowest crime in London. The officer explained that, in Harrow, the fear of crime was disproportionate to actual crime.

Members asked questions about domestic violence rates and an officer reported that Harrow had the highest conviction rate in Harrow. The officer explained that the third party reporting sites used to report race crimes could also be used to report domestic violence.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder's responses and the Strategic Performance Report be noted.

24. **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which updated Members on the work undertaken by the Sub-Committee since the last meeting.

Members discussed the content of the report of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel and commented that the report should be circulated to all Members of the Council, who should be offered training on Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report of the Challenge Panel be agreed;

(2) the comments received from the co-opted member be incorporated into the report;

(3) the Portfolio Holder for Business Development, subject to funding being made available, consider making available provision for suitable training to Members;

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

(5) the report be circulated to all members of Council;

(6) the report be drawn to the attention of the Chairmen of the Licensing and General Purposes Committee and Development Control Committee.

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

The Panel received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy which asked Members to consider and make comments on the consultation draft of the refreshed Community Plan. An officer explained that the Community Plan would replace the Community Strategy and set out the way in which Harrow would develop over the next 15 years. Consultation was taking place with over 70 community groups and Members. Members of the Sub-Committee were invited to provide comments individually or as a Sub-Committee before 27 October 2006.

In response to a question from a Member, the officer explained that 9 or 10 comments had been received from individuals and community groups and some had focused on there being too little about older people and disabled people in the report. He reported that in November 2006, the Harrow Strategic Partnership Board would consider the comments that had been received on the Community Plan.

A Member commented that Northwick Park Hospital did not have a stroke unit and that every hospital should have one as it was imperative to treat patients immediately after they had had a stroke. The officer informed the Member that this comment would be included as a formal comment of the report.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments be noted.

26. **Scrutiny Work Programme:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which asked Members to consider and agree the major topics to be included in the work programme for 2006/07 and to consider the scheduling of longer-term topics for the period 2006-2010.

Members considered whether the police could be invited to attend the January 2007 meeting for the items relating to alcohol misuse and performance reporting.

Members discussed the work programme for 2006/07 and the possibility of combining the proposed financial inclusion project with the fuel poverty as the next topic for review as they both related to anti-poverty initiatives and working with the voluntary sector. It was estimated that this review would take up a substantial part of the year.

Members thanked the scrutiny officer for her work.

RESOLVED: That (1) Anti-poverty/voluntary sector – financial inclusion and Anti-poverty – fuel poverty be combined as the next topic for review;

(2) the Borough Commander be invited to attend the January 2007 meeting;

(3) a representative of the police and a Council licensing officer be invited to attend the January 2007 meeting of the Sub-Committee for the item on alcohol misuse, alongside the Director of Public Health, Harrow PCT.

27. **Terms of Reference of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Sub Committee:**

RESOLVED: That the amended terms of reference be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.15 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANTHONY SEYMOUR
Chairman