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## REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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### MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2007

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Chairman: \* Councillor Stanley Sheinwald

Councillors: \* B E Gate \* Anthony Seymour  
 \* Mitzi Green \* Mrs Rekha Shah  
 \* Barry Macleod-Cullinane \* Dinesh Solanki  
 \* Jerry Miles \* Yogesh Teli (3)  
 \* Paul Scott (1) \* Mark Versallion

\* Denotes Member present  
 (1) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Members

[Note: Councillor Jeremy Zeid also attended this meeting to speak on Recommendations I and II and the items indicated at Minutes 157 to 160 below].

### **PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **RECOMMENDATION I - Reconfiguring Scrutiny**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which set out proposals for the reconfiguration of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function whilst maintaining the existing principles of Scrutiny as an independent Councillor-led function working with local people to improve services.

Members commented on various aspects of the report, including the special responsibility allowance (SRA) for scrutiny Members with additional responsibilities. The Committee was of the view that the Scrutiny Policy Leads and the Scrutiny Performance Leads for Children and Young People, Sustainable Development and Enterprise and Safer and Stronger Communities ought to receive the same SRA. However, the Leads for Adult Health and Social Care should receive a higher SRA to reflect and recognise the demands arising from that area of work.

Some Members gave a guarded welcome to the reconfiguration in the knowledge that there would be an opportunity to carry out a review after 6 and 12 months to identify changes. The following issues were raised:

- the existing advisers, whose specialist advice had been valuable to the work of scrutiny, ought to be retained;
- a non-partisan approach was essential to ensure effective working of scrutiny;
- it was essential that the Scrutiny Review Group on NHS finances continued to meet;
- the proposed Committees might not have adequate capacity to scrutinise the health service and the police effectively;
- the increased size of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might be unwieldy;
- scrutiny was moving towards informal structures with some meetings being held in private, thereby reducing transparency;
- the reconfiguration and the support received by Members were driven by the budget, which might compromise the effectiveness of scrutiny.

Other Members were of the view that a focus on outputs and key issues would ensure effective scrutiny. The reconfiguration would provide Members with flexibility and an opportunity to work differently rather than through Committees.

Members were assured that the scrutiny officer support would remain the same. Other Directorates and Partners would also provide support. Officers would ensure that issues that required scrutinising were not overlooked, and that the Scrutiny Leads were fully supported. Given the changed nature of Councillors' responsibilities and the absence of a service-specific committee structure, there would be mandatory training for all scrutiny Councillors on health, children's issues and community safety. In addition, there would be a compulsory session on scrutiny in general for all Councillors.

Some of the existing ways of working would continue, and a review of the reconfiguration would be conducted in six months' time.

Having agreed the reconfiguration and the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee, including the establishment of Scrutiny Policy Leads and Scrutiny Performance Leads to consider the policy and performance issues in relation to Adult Health and Social Care, Children and Young People, Sustainable Development and Enterprise and Safer and Stronger Communities, it was

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Council)

That (1) the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Council be reconfigured as set out in the report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy circulated to all Members of the Council;

(2) the reconfigured Overview and Scrutiny Committee be established;

(3) the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be appointed, including its Chairman;

(4) the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be agreed;

(5) the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the SRAs be noted and agreed.

(See also Minute 157).

**RECOMMENDATION II - Draft Corporate Plan 2007-2010**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which set out the values and objectives for the work that would be undertaken by the Council between 2007-2010.

The Council's Corporate Plan also included the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP), approved by the Cabinet on 21 June 2007, which provided a flavour of the Council's performance across a wide range of services. Attention was drawn to an updated version of the Corporate Plan, which had been circulated to all Members.

Members commented on the Corporate Plan, including the presentation of the BVPP, both of which would inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme allowing it to challenge and act as a critical friend.

The Committee also drew attention to the proposal to empower the community to request that items be called-in in future and suggested that this should be included in the draft Corporate Plan in the section about participation.

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Council)

That (1) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomes the efforts made by the administration in turning its manifesto into specific corporate priorities as practical examples of their vision against which the Council would be judged;

(2) the draft Corporate Plan be amended by the inclusion of the public right to call-in within the participation section.

(See also Minute 159).

**PART II - MINUTES**149. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Mrs Myra Michael  
Councillor Christopher Noyce

Reserve Member

Councillor Yogesh Teli  
Councillor Paul Scott

150. **Declarations of Interest:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interest was declared:

Councillor Mitzi Green declared an interest in that her relative was in receipt of disability benefit. Her interest was general and did not relate to a specific item on the agenda. She declared the interest in case there was a discussion on benefits during the course of the meeting.

151. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

**RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.

152. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 24 April 2007 and the special meetings held on 14 May 2007 and 12 June 2007 be deferred until printed in the Council Bound Minute Volume.

153. **Public Questions:**

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

154. **Petitions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions had been received.

155. **Deputations:**

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

156. **References from Council/Cabinet:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no reports were received.

157. **Reconfiguring Scrutiny:**

Further to Recommendation I, there was some discussion about the availability and release of papers in advance of meetings. A Member made a general comment on the need for better timetabling. It was noted that the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee would be meeting with the Chief Executive where this matter would also be discussed. It was clarified that, in relation to paragraph 3.42 of the report, the agreement of both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman would be required. Some Members expressed reservations on the proposed local government leadership models.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Finance Sub-Committee be established;

(2) the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee be agreed;

(3) the Committee size, composition and special responsibilities of the new structure be agreed;

(4) the principles for the payment of Special Responsibility Allowance for Scrutiny Councillors be agreed and referred to the Leader of the Council for consideration;

(5) the proposals regarding the frequency of meetings for each Committee be agreed;

(6) the Chairmen, the Vice-Chairmen and the policy and performance leads review the effectiveness of the reconfigured function after 6 and 12 months and identify and report back appropriate changes as necessary.

158. **Cultural Services Review – Final Report:**

The Committee received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which introduced the final report of the Scrutiny Review Group on Cultural Services.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group highlighted some of the key findings, and thanked Members of the Review Group and officers for their work and support. She stated that the Review Group had met with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services to discuss the recommendations.

Following a discussion on the governance arrangements for contracts and Service Level Agreements (SLAs), the need to review some of them to identify best principles, and to incorporate this area of work into the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme, it was

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Group on Cultural Services be endorsed;

(2) the report be referred to Cabinet for consideration;

(3) Cabinet be requested to:

- (i) note that the report highlighted the need to strengthen governance structures in the Council's current SLAs, contracts and partnerships around cultural services, and
- (ii) implement a review of the wider principles that should inform the governance structures of all the Council's SLAs, contracts and partnerships.

(4) the Cultural Services Review be placed on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme in six months' time.

159. **Draft Corporate Plan 2007 -2010:**

Further to Recommendation II, Members commented on the Draft Corporate Plan 2007-2010 and the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) with a view to informing the Committee's Work Programme. They identified a number of areas where further scrutiny was essential, additional information was required and listed areas that needed to be included in Scrutiny's Work Programme. They noted that there was an opportunity to add value to the flagship actions identified in the Corporate Plan and the BVPIs.

Members raised questions on the proposed new Sports Centres, education issues such as absence rates in primary schools, Children's Centres, the number of racial incidents in the Borough, homelessness and the traffic schemes. Members identified areas on which the lead scrutiny Members could focus. They noted the need to appreciate the underlying trends when examining performance.

The Director of People, Performance and Policy and an officer welcomed the suggestions made by Members to improve the information provided on the BVPIs, such as providing a fuller narrative in the comments section. They informed Members that templates for the provision of information on BVPIs were set by central government and that some of the requests from Members would have to be included elsewhere. The Director assured Members that the areas suggested for further scrutiny would be incorporated in the draft Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:** That the suggestions made by Members be included in the draft Scrutiny Work Programme.

160. **Local Area Agreement – Annual Performance Update:**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, which updated Members on performance against the indicators in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Particular reference was made to the progress against the stretched indicators, which had the potential to earn reward grant.

In response to questions on stretched targets relating to school exclusions and attendance, an officer explained that:-

- where the stretched targets were in danger of not being met, the Chairmen accountable for those areas had been requested to develop action plans to address the current under-performance. The Harrow Strategic Partnership Executive, at its meeting on 9 August 2007, would be considering these action plans;
- the Corporate Director of Children's Services would be made aware of the Committee's comment regarding the introduction of a physically challenging environment for pupils;
- organisations that delivered on stretched targets, including schools, would earn a proportion of any reward grant earned;
- the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, when dealing with education business at its future meeting, could look into the issue of exclusions;
- research on the reward payment rules would be carried out and sent to Members.

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

161. **Scrutiny Scorecard:**

An officer introduced the report, which set out proposals for a new method for scrutiny to monitor its own performance. Members welcomed the proposals with some reservations. A Member remarked that this would be a valuable tool for the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee. Another Member was of the view that the subjective nature of some of the measures might make them difficult to assess. The point was also made that, in respect of measure C7 – Raising Scrutiny's Profile, the residents' panel had not yet been established. The scrutiny officer advised that these issues had been taken into account in the development of the scorecard, and that the residents' panel was to be established as a corporate flagship action in 2007/08.

**RESOLVED:** That the establishment of a performance management system for the scrutiny function, as set out in the annual and quarterly scrutiny scorecards attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

162. **Extension and Termination of Meeting:**

In accordance with the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 6.7(ii)(b), it was

**RESOLVED:** At (1) 10.00 pm to continue until 10.15 pm;

(2) at 10.15 pm to continue until 10.20 pm;

(3) at 10.20 pm to continue until 10.25 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.36 pm, closed at 10.20 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR STANLEY SHEINWALD  
Chairman