

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**29 APRIL 2008**

Chairman: * Councillor Mark Versallion

Councillors: * Ms Nana Asante * Christopher Noyce
 * Robert Benson Phillip O'Dell
 * B E Gate Mrs Rekha Shah
 * Ashok Kulkarni * Dinesh Solanki
 Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Yogesh Teli

* Denotes Member present

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**50. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.51. **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.52. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following 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. By Exception: Officers' Report on Performance in Workforce Development	This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members are requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency, in order to be able to consider the most up to date information on this item.

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

53. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the special meeting held on 22 January 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chairman be authorised to sign them when they were printed in the Bound Minute Volume.54. **Public Questions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.55. **Petitions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.56. **Deputations:****RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.57. **References from Council and Other Committees/Panels:****RESOLVED:** To note that no reports were received.

58. **Chairman's Report:**
The Chairman introduced the report, which set out issues considered by the Chairman since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- RESOLVED:** To note and endorse the content of the Chairman's Report.
59. **Protocol for the Operation of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Update:**
The Sub-Committee received a report, setting out an update to the protocol for the operation of the Sub-Committee.
- RESOLVED:** To (1) note and agree the amendments to the Protocol, attached as an appendix to the report;
- (2) receive at the next meeting the first of a series of quarterly reports relating to in-year budget issues as set out in 7.7 of the amended Protocol.
60. **By Exception: Officers' Report on Performance in Customer Satisfaction:**
The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Strategy and Business Support, setting out key points in relation to performance issues in the area of customer satisfaction. An officer informed the Sub-Committee that there had been no further test of public satisfaction since the results of the previous year's MORI Quality of Life Survey reported to the Sub-Committee in November 2007. He drew Members' attention to the fact that one of the targets in the Council's new Communications contract was to ensure a significant improvement in the number of people who felt informed by the Council. In addition, a new programme of service reviews was being developed with a view to improving the efficiency, effectiveness and value for money of key services, and the Chief Executive's review of the organisational structure included giving more prominence to customer care functions. The next MORI Survey – the last in the current contract – was currently being carried out, with initial findings expected by the end of June 2008. There was some doubt about whether the anticipated Place Survey would take place on time, as problems had arisen during the pilot stage in other parts of London. As an alternative, the London Borough Councils were considering a joint survey on Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI).
- The decision in the 2008/09 budget to allocate growth of more than £1,000,000 to increase environmental services standards was aimed at improving the cleanliness of Harrow's streets. The officer reported that this should have an impact on the level of customer satisfaction, although it would take some months for the impact to be reflected in any survey.
- Members discussed the Sub-Committee's involvement in drafting a number of questions to include in the Place Survey, should this go ahead, or the alternative BVPI Survey. Members also discussed the possibility of matching the results of the MORI Survey to information submitted to the Improvement Board looking at the last three months of 2007/08.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the report, and the proposals for improvement, be noted;
- (2) the results of the MORI survey be considered on an exception basis, for example, where an issue has been identified as a cause for concern;
- (3) the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Scrutiny Officer organise an appropriate way of involving the Sub-Committee in drafting questions to include in the next customer satisfaction survey to be carried out.
61. **By Exception: Officers' Report on Performance in Workforce Development:**
The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Interim Divisional Director, Human Resources and Development, setting out information on performance issues in the area of Human Resources and Development. Members were disappointed that no officer from the Human Resources and Development Directorate was present at the meeting to present the report.
- An officer drew Members' attention to issues in the Corporate Improvement Programme relating to Human Resources and Development as set out in the report. Members noted that the issue of performance-related pay was being considered by the Council's Corporate Strategy Board as part of a wider programme to make Harrow Council an employer of choice and that the issues in the report had been discussed at the relevant Improvement Board.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the report, and the proposals for improvement, be noted;

(2) no further action be taken.

62. **By Exception: Officers' Report on Performance in Planning Appeals:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Community and Environment, setting out key points in relation to performance issues in the Planning Appeals function in the Development Management Service. An officer reported that one of the key issues was the fact that resources were focused on Government targets for determining minor applications within eight weeks and major applications within 12 weeks, which put pressure on the department to make a decision without negotiating with the applicant. If such a decision was then refused at the margins, the applicant could appeal and was likely to be successful. Also, until Harrow adopted a Local Development Framework (LDF), the Council would be less likely to win appeals, being in an interim situation between deleting policies from the current Unitary Development Plan and adopting the LDF. The officer reported that many planning authorities were in a similar position. Measures taken to improve the effectiveness of planning enforcement had had an adverse effect on the time taken to process planning applications and appeals. This impact was being mitigated by improving processes in these areas and by the additional resources approved by Cabinet for 2008/09. However, the difficulty of recruiting and retaining experienced planning staff remained an issue – not only locally, but also regionally and nationally – and was being considered by the Council's Workforce Development Group.

Answering questions from Members, the officer reported that in the past year costs had been awarded against the Council in only two appeals, amounting to a total of £2,500. Of a total of approximately 3,300 planning applications approximately 90% had been delegated to officers and around 350 had been referred to Committee. Out of a total of 167 appeal decisions in 2007/08 75 were allowed, 23 of which were officer decisions which had been referred to Committee and overturned by Members.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report, and the proposals for improvement, be noted;

(2) no further action be taken.

63. **Finance Issues:**

The Sub-Committee considered a verbal report of the Divisional Director, Corporate Finance and Procurement, setting out key points in relation to performance issues budget monitoring and financial effectiveness. The Divisional Director reported that, at the request of the Council, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) was carrying out a review of the quarterly financial and budget monitoring reports to Cabinet. The review was aimed at improving the reliability and consistency of financial reporting, and was funded by Capital Ambition, a London local government organisation set up to improve public services across the capital. The draft out-turn of the 2007/08 budget would be reported to the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee on 24 June.

An officer reported that Capita was conducting a review of the use of SAP, the Council's business software package, and that a report on the Council's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) was due to be published.

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

(2) the Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider the PWC report on financial reporting;

(3) the Scrutiny Officer supply copies of the reports on SAP and ERP to any Member of the Sub-Committee on request.

64. **Scrutiny Scorecard:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Strategy and Business Support, setting out Scrutiny performance in the previous three months, together with end-of-year performance for 2007/08, as recorded in the Scrutiny Scorecard. An officer reported that the data provided helpful information and was a good basis for future analysis. New targets would be agreed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman following discussion of end-of-year performance, and a change to the method of data collection was being considered in order to enable consistent assessment. Consideration of issues relating to the Cabinet's Forward Plan was still at an early stage, and one suggestion was that the Forward Plan could be discussed at the monthly Chairman's meeting. The officer reported that the lack of significant data available on the benefits of service reviews was due in large part to the fact that the Scrutiny Work Programme had been placed on hold in early 2007. However, monitoring mechanisms were now in place and data would be recorded in full for 2008/09.

RESOLVED: That (1) the scorecard and commentary, as set out in the appendix to the report, be noted;

(2) the proposed way forward set out in the report and scorecard commentary be approved;

(3) the annual data, and the Sub-Committee's discussion of it, be referred to the next available Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for discussion.

65. **Reference to Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Strategy and Business Support, recommending that resolutions and findings from this meeting be reported to the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: To approve the drafting of a reference report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, setting out findings and resolutions, and identifying any issues on which the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee recommended that an item be escalated for further consideration.

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

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6.6 (ii) (Part 4F of the Constitution) it was:

RESOLVED: At 9.56 pm to continue until 10.15 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 10.10 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARK VERSALLION
Chairman