
REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2008

Chairman:	* Councillor Stanley Sheinwald	
Councillors:	* John Cowan (1) * Mrs Margaret Davine * B E Gate * Mitzi Green * Ashok Kulkarni (2) * Jerry Miles	* Janet Mote * Anthony Seymour * Dinesh Solanki * Yogesh Teli * Mark Versallion
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) † Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) * Mr R Chauhan * Mrs D Speel

* Denotes Member present
(1) and (2) Denote category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL

PART II - MINUTES

436. **Janet Skipworth:**
Members were informed that Janet Skipworth, a former Liberal Democrat Councillor for Headstone North Ward, Harrow, had died recently. Councillors B E Gate and Anthony Seymour paid tribute to her and the work she had carried out in Harrow. The Committee observed a minute's silence in her memory. Members asked that their condolences be conveyed to her husband, John Skipworth.
437. **Welcome:**
The Chairman welcomed the following officers from the Children's Services Directorate:-

Gail Hancock, Head of Service for Safeguarding, Family Placement and Support
Adrian Parker, Head of Service, Achievement and Inclusion
Roger Rickman, Head of Service, Special Needs Services.

Councillor John Cowan was also welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee.
438. **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 Manji Kara
Councillor Vina Mithani | Councillor John Cowan
Councillor Ashok Kulkarni |
439. **Declarations of Interest:**

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

Agenda Items 11/12/13 – 2004-2008 Educational Attainment/Special Educational Needs/Care Matters Update – Harrow's response to Children and Young Person's Bill
Councillor Janet Mote declared interests in that she was a governor of St John Fisher School and that during May 2006 – May 2008 she had been Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and was, currently, the Chairman of Council's Corporate Parenting Panel. She would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to these items.

Agenda Item 12 – Special Educational Needs
The following declared personal interests in their capacity as school governors. They would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.

Councillor

John Cowan
Yogesh Teli
Dinesh Solanki
Ashok Kulkarni
Jerry Miles
Mitzi Green
Mrs Margaret Davine

Governor of

Aylward School
Elmgrove First and Middle School
Park High School
Roxbourne First and Middle School
Rooks Heath School
Kenmore Park First and Middle School
Newton Farm First and Middle School

Parent Governor Representative

Mrs Despo Speel

Governor of

Cannon Lane Middle School

General Interest

Councillor Stanley Sheinwald declared a personal interest, as he was Chair of Carers' Partnership Group. Should Carer matters be discussed under any of the items on the agenda, he would remain in the Chair and take part in the discussion and decision relating to the item.

440. **Minutes:**

In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2008 were admitted late to the agenda in order that the minutes could be approved at the earliest opportunity. The minutes had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated due to the proximity of the meetings and the need to consult.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2008 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

441. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

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

442. **Change in Membership of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee:**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Eric Silver be replaced by Councillor John Cowan as 1st Reserve on the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

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

RESOLVED: To note that there were no references from Council or Cabinet.

444. **Report from Lead Scrutiny Members:**

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive, which set out matters that had been considered by the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Children and Young People. At the meeting it was clarified that, with respect to transition from children and young people to adults, a number of inspections had been carried out.

Since the report from the Scrutiny Lead Members had been circulated, and following the decision of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 November 2008, the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise had met with representatives from Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum on 18 November 2008 to examine the Right to Manage Process. In light of its importance, the Lead Members gave an oral report on this matter.

The Scrutiny Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise stated that, in their opinion, a 2-day Challenge Panel would be required. They suggested that the first day of the Challenge Panel involve meeting with tenants' and leaseholders' representatives first and then with representatives of the Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), and the second day of the Challenge Panel involve First Call, the company acting as an Independent Tenant Adviser. The Lead Members sought the agreement of the Committee to proceed with the Challenge Panel, elect Chairmen and Membership. It was intended to report back to the Committee on the outcome of the Challenge Panels in January 2009.

The Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Corporate Effectiveness and Finance had also met since the report had been circulated. They would be examining four specific areas.

RESOLVED: That (1) in relation to Care Matters, Scrutiny Performance and Policy Lead Members for Children and Young People decide on further action following the consideration by this Committee of the update report (Resolution 448 refers);

(2) in relation to the Adoption Inspection, the Scrutiny Performance and Policy Lead Members for Children and Young People obtain and read the full Adoption Inspection report and discuss it with the Director of Children's Services;

(3) in relation to the Obesity Review, Committee Members and officers consider how monitoring of the implementation of recommendations could be improved;

(4) in relation to Transition from Children and Young People to Adults matters, the Scrutiny Performance and Policy Lead Members for Children and Young People discuss the provision of a link officer with the Corporate Director of Children's Services;

(5) in relation to the Right to Manage Process

- (i) a 2-day Challenge Panel on the basis set out in the preamble above be agreed;
- (ii) the chairing of the 2-day Challenge Panel be shared by Scrutiny Performance and Policy Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise and the Panel's membership be as follows: Councillors Bob Currie, Jerry Miles, Dinesh Solanki, Jerry Miles, Bob Currie and, subject to their availability which was dependant on the dates of the Challenge Panel, Councillors Anthony Seymour, Stanley Sheinwald and Mark Versallion;
- (iii) further communication on the dates for the Challenge Panel to be communicated electronically;

(6) it be noted that the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Corporate Effectiveness and Finance would be examining the following areas:-

- Strategic Workforce Development Plan
- Middle Management Development Programme
- Local Area Agreement (LAA), in particular pump priming money
- Councillor Call for Action and why it was not operational in Harrow.

445. **Minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub- Committee meeting held on 29 October 2008:**

In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2008 were admitted late to the agenda so that actions arising from the Minutes could be agreed and taken, as appropriate. The minutes had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated as they were being consulted on.

The Chairman of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee stated that a new approach was being taken whereby the minutes of the Sub-Committee would be presented to its parent Committee with a view to the Committee agreeing the actions arising. He drew attention to issues around the ownership of the Obesity Review recommendations, a matter that had also been raised under the Report from Lead Members earlier at this meeting and stated that updates on the implementation of the recommendations arising would be sought through Directorate Improvement Plans. The Primary Care Trust would be invited to the January 2009 meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee to report back on progress made on recommendations arising from the Obesity Review.

A Member agreed that the monitoring of recommendations arising from the Obesity Review recommendations was important and suggested that reminders ought to be sent every two months to stakeholders.

RESOLVED: That the actions arising from the minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 29 October 2008 be noted and in so far as is necessary, agreed.

(See also Minute 444).

446. **2004 to 2008 Educational Attainment:**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which set out Harrow's results from Foundation Stage Profile to GCSE from 2004 to 2008. The report included comparisons with statistical neighbours and against national averages.

An officer drew attention to the trends in results and stated that pupils in Harrow schools made good progress. Those entering the system at below average level made vast improvements by end of Key Stage 4 and left the system well above average. Harrow was 9% ahead of the national average. The challenges that lay ahead were maintaining and improving results with a changing pupil population in Harrow. The key challenge was to narrow the gap in overall performance and underachievement in some groups, such as disadvantaged groups and some ethnic groups including white children.

The officer added that at Foundation Stage, Harrow's results were below national average. By age 7, they were at national average, and by age 11 they were at or above national average. The key indicator for age 13 pupils was 5 good GCSE results inclusive of Maths and English. The educational outcomes of pupils at age 18 and beyond would only be available in future years.

In response to questions from the Committee, the officer stated that:

- measures had been put in place to improve outcomes at Foundation and pre-Foundation/Nursery Stages, which involved working with parents. The gaps in achievement were 'stubborn' due to changes in context, for example, the norm for the Somali Community was to stay at home. These measures/links needed embedding before their impacts could be assessed;
- the National Strategy was one of Harrow's support mechanisms. Learning from neighbours was a crucial factor in making improvements and reducing gaps. Foundation Stage teachers continued to learn from their counter-parts in other boroughs. An inconsistent approach to the National Strategy might also be a contributing factor and officers needed to identify real issues in this area;
- a comprehensive list of outcomes were measured at Foundation Stage, such as mathematical ability and personal and social development. In total, eight outcomes were measured;
- teaching in classrooms with mixed ability pupils was no longer directed to those with lower ability, instead 'personalisation' was in place and there was a greater emphasis to 'plan' progress for all pupils. The negative impact on pupils with above average ability in a mixed ability classroom had been reduced by this approach;
- comparison with neighbours was based on statistical neighbours and chosen by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Brent was not considered to be Harrow's statistical neighbour;
- there was a significant drop in pupils achieving Levels 4 and 5 or above in Key Stage 2 Science. Nationally the averages were less than in Harrow. There was no real explanation for the significant drop in Harrow, which could have been due to the pupils, teaching methods or other factors.

A Member commended the work being done by the Children's Services Directorate with Children's Centres and the adoption of good practice models from other authorities in making improvements at Key Stages 2 and 3. These measures combined with improved planning by teachers would add value and help improve results. Whilst also commending the work of the Directorate, another Member highlighted the importance of the role of parents and the need for the stakeholders to support each other and work together to add value to the education system. It was important that the authority supported lone parents in particular.

In response, the officer stated that family numeracy and literacy programmes were being run and that Canons Cluster had set up a Parent Ambassador Scheme, which had received national recognition/interest.

RESOLVED: To note the report.

(See also Minute 439)

447. **Special Educational Needs:**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development setting out the number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Statements, the number of children at School Action Plus, the number of requests for statutory special needs assessments and the use of the Advisory Service for Parents.

An officer introduced the report and updated the Committee by explaining how children with SEN were identified, and responded to questions as follows:-

- achievement of children with SEN in Harrow was good in comparison with its statistical neighbours. The support role provided was fair and equitable and based on need. Expenditure in this area could be volatile. In terms of the differentials in the requests received against those agreed in 2006/07 and 2007/08 could be in the main attributed to preschool requests where the quality of application received could be an issue. This was an area where more support was needed for pre-school providers;
- the significant rise in the overall percentage of Harrow pupils with special needs statements from primary to secondary schools could be associated with difficulty in meeting the needs of older children. It was not due to pupils with SEN being missed out;
- a range of stakeholders were involved in working with pre-school providers. The provision of a specific resource to support the voluntary sector could be considered, as suggested by a Member. However, it ought to be noted that children's needs were not being compromised as a result. School Action Plus was considered to be appropriate in this regard but the situation would be monitored;
- some groups were over-represented in School Action Plus but schools were getting better at differentiating children with SEN, educational experience and learning needs;
- responsibility for School Action Plus was dependant on where the child was being educated. It did not distinguish between a Harrow/non-Harrow resident;
- a comprehensive programme of training was available on a range of topics. A nationally run Development programme was also in place, which covered topics such as dyslexia;
- in terms of the availability of data for pupils with SEN, this was obtained from the Schools' Census and could be overwhelming. There was a steady growth in the number of children with autism. The officer explained the differences between School Action which was action within the school, School Action Plus which was involving external agencies, and Statutory Assessment, which involved the local authority;
- the authority had adopted a method of funding. Costed Statements for those with higher levels of support would be provided;
- additional funding was made available to schools, particularly those that had to deliver on Costed Statements. The number of SEN children was matched by corresponding funding. The ethos was that funding ought to 'follow' the child.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) members of the Committee be provided with data on the number of appeals received for refusal to carry out a statutory special needs assessment and how many were successful.

448. **Care Matters Update - Harrow's response to the Children and Young Persons Bill 2007:**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services on the Council's response to the Children and Young Persons Bill 2007, which would reform and strengthen the statutory framework around the care system. The Bill contained a range of initiatives and provisions aimed at enabling children and young people in the care system to receive high quality care.

An officer introduced the report and described the actions taken by the Council to improve services for Children Looked After (CLA). These had focussed on improving educational outcomes for CLA, which was a key issue both nationally and at local level

in Harrow. Whilst overall academic performance remained strong, the attainment gap between CLA and their peers remained challenging.

The officer outlined the various initiatives proposed and identified the costs of implementing them. She circulated an aide-memoire outlining the initiatives, and responded to questions as follows:

- stringent safeguarding procedures were in place when employing staff and all staff were CRB checked before they were in post;
- Councillors serving on the Corporate Parenting Panel were CRB Checked;
- life chances of CLA would be improved through education, and a holistic approach taken by independent review officers had been beneficial in this regard;
- advocacy projects, such as 'Your Voice Your Call', had yielded good results and provided opportunities for independent living;
- the Independent Visitor (IV) Scheme, a be-friending scheme developed with Harrow Association of Voluntary Services, would help ensure that the CLA voice was heard. The IV Partnership Co-ordinator would be required to have a range of skills, a background of working with children, the ability to recruit supporting volunteers and previous experience. The volunteers would be assessed on their communication skills and it was intended to seek those outside the professional network;
- the aide-memoire circulated at the meeting concentrated primarily on education where the Council could add value to CLA. However, a whole range of many other services were provided to ensure a holistic approach to caring for CLA;
- the Welfare Call System, a tool for the early identification of CLA school attendance issues, would apply to those living in Harrow, including those CLA outside Harrow. The intention was to re-integrate those affected into schools as soon as possible;
- Choice was offered to CLA beyond age 18, which would allow them to stay with their foster family. A Scheme known as Supported Lodgings whereby CLA could elect to remain with their foster carers had been praised nationally.

Members were disappointed that a previous recommendation of a Scrutiny Review of CLA relating to training for Councillors who were regarded and entrusted as corporate parents had not yet been implemented. It was noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel had raised the same issue. Following a discussion on how this matter ought to be progressed and following consideration of various suggestions, it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee write to the Chairman of Member Development Panel with a request that mandatory training for Councillors on their corporate parenting role be arranged as soon as possible and at the latest by July 2009;

(3) once the training sessions referred to in (2) above had been arranged, the Chief Whips of all Groups and the Independent Councillor be requested to ensure that all Councillors attend the training.

(See also Minute 439)

449. **Scrutiny Review Update:**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive, which summarised progress made on a number of projects in the scrutiny review programme. Officers undertook to provide a detailed report to the next available meeting which would capture all reviews that needed to be progressed.

A Member was of the view that, in light of the matter having been discussed at the meeting that evening, the Committee ought to continue to monitor the Care Matters agenda.

RESOLVED: That (1) progress on the following projects be noted: Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow, Standing Scrutiny Review of NHS Finances, Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget, Extended Schools, Implications of 'Healthcare for London – A Framework for Action', Preparing for the White Paper on Care Matters - Time for Change, and Place Survey;

(2) Councillor Dinesh Solanki's name be included in the membership of Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow;

(3) the Care Matters agenda be monitored and submitted to Committee in due course.

450. **Place Survey Challenge Panel - Final Report:**

The Committee received Recommendation 1 of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting on 29 October 2008 in this regard. The Chairman of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee highlighted that the majority of the recommendations of the Place Survey Challenge Panel had been incorporated into the Place Survey, and felt that this was a good example of the views of a scrutiny review having been rapidly and positively taken on board for the immediate benefit of the Council instead of going through the normal Committee approval processes.

The Scrutiny Manager updated Members on the Place Survey. Unlike some of Harrow's neighbouring boroughs, the Council was on track to obtain the required numbers of responses in the period specified – 1,100 responses by 19 December 2008. The results would be submitted to the Audit Commission by 30 January 2009. This would be unweighted data, which the Commission would process and add weighting factors to. It had not committed to a date for supplying the weighted data back.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Committee revisit the Place Survey in February or March 2009, when the results of the Survey would be available;

(2) the outcomes from the Adults and Housing User Group discussions be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Lead Members and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee for consideration when available.

451. **Reconfiguration Findings:**

RESOLVED: To note that this report would be submitted to the 9 December 2008 meeting of the Committee.

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

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

RESOLVED: At 10.00 pm to continue until 10.15 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 10.03 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR STANLEY SHEINWALD
Chairman