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**REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**


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**MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2009**


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Chairman:	* Councillor Stanley Sheinwald	
Councillors:	* Mrs Margaret Davine * B E Gate * Mitzi Green * Manji Kara * Jerry Miles * Mrs Vina Mithani	* 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  
† Denotes apologies received

[Note: Councillor Susan Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety and Richard Walton, Borough Commander, also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 489 below].

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**
**PART II - MINUTES**
**482. Attendance by Reserve Members:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

**483. Declarations of Interest:**

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

(i) Agenda Item 11 – School Re-Organisation Including Impact of 6<sup>th</sup> Form Re-Organisation on Colleges

Members of the Committee declared personal interests in their capacity as governors of schools in Harrow, details of which are set out below. They would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and any decision on that item.

<u>Member</u>	<u>School</u>
Councillor Mrs Margaret Davine	Newton Farm First and Middle School
Councillor B E Gate	St. Dominic's College
Councillor Mitzi Green	Kenmore Park First and Middle School
Councillor Manji Kara	Stanburn First School
	Stanburn Middle School
	Glebe First and Middle School
Councillor Jerry Miles	Rooks Heath High School
Councillor Vina Mithani	Glebe School
Councillor Janet Mote	St John Fisher First and Middle School
Councillor Anthony Seymour	Pinner Park First and Middle School
Councillor Dinesh Solanki	Park High School
Councillor Yogesh Teli	Elmgrove First and Middle School
Mrs Despo Speel	Parent governor of Cannon Lane Middle School.

(ii) Agenda Items 12/13 – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment/Right to Manage  
Councillor Yogesh Teli declared personal interests in these items by virtue of his role as Cabinet Support Member to the Adults and Housing Portfolio Holder. He stated that he had not participated in any decisions relating to these matters. He remained in the room to take part in the discussions and decisions on the items.

484. **Minutes:**  
In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2009 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 meetings and the need to consult.
- RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.
485. **Public Questions:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.
486. **Petitions:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.
487. **Deputations:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.
488. **References from Council/Cabinet:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that there were no references from Council or Cabinet.
489. **Harrow Strategic Assessment 2008/09 - The Joint Analytical Group:**  
In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the document in this regard was admitted late to the agenda so that the Members could be briefed on this matter. The document had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated as the Partners had to be consulted before the document was placed in the public domain.
- The Chairman welcomed the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Richard Walton, and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety, Councillor Susan Hall, to the meeting. He invited the Borough Commander to address the meeting.
- The Borough Commander made a presentation to the Committee on crime in Harrow during which he referred to the paper circulated with the supplemental agenda entitled 'Harrow Strategic Assessment 2008/09' produced by the Joint Analytical Group which comprised of the following Partners: Harrow NHS Primary Care Trust, Harrow Council and the Metropolitan Police. The assessment was an executive summary of a comprehensive document, which was available on request. The profiles set out in the report were reviewed six-monthly and helped to review the priorities for the borough.
- Whilst there was an overall decline in all offences, Members' attention was drawn to the following key points:
- There had been a 17% increase in burglaries during 2007/08 following an all time low in 2006/07. The level, to date, in 2008/09 was an increase of 5%. The rate was expected to go up but burglary remained the highest priority for the Metropolitan Police. In line with the national trend, North-West London was suffering from a substantial increase in burglaries. Motor vehicle crime had dropped due to the drop in the price of metal.
  - Drugs Offences had increased possibly due to the increase in activity by the police against this type of crime. Cannabis street warnings had increased.
  - Criminal Damage had gone down, and grievous bodily harm had increased since 2005/06. The increase in the latter type of violence was fuelled by those under the influence of alcohol and its abuse. In Harrow, the work carried out by the Licensing Panel contributed positively to ensuring that crime in this area did not increase.
  - Harrow had not seen an increase in knife crime in comparison with some of the London boroughs. Serious youth violence had increased in London. Offensive weapons possession had not increased.

- Harrow did not have any challenging areas but it was recognised that the Wealdstone corridor was a hotspot for violent crime.
- Fear of crime remained high in Harrow, a disproportionate reaction when compared to the level of crime in the borough which was low.
- Youth accounted for 24% of all persons accused of Notifiable Offences in Harrow. Harrow was ranked the lowest in London. However there were areas of concern in relation to young people in Harrow and their criminal activities. There appeared to be an emergence of 'gangs' in Harrow and the police were tackling this issue by working with various agencies.
- Domestic violence was high in Harrow.
- Increase in unemployment in Harrow, and London as a whole, was likely to lead to an increase in acquisitive crime and possibly violent offending.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety added that enviro-crime was being addressed by the Council in the form of a campaign for clearing 'grot spots'. Joint-working between the Council, the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and the Probation Service was helping. The Portfolio Holder was concerned that fear of crime was on the increase and stressed that crime in Harrow needed to be looked at in the context of the base figure instead of percentage increase.

Members asked a number of questions relating to drug offences and conviction rates in the following types of crime; anti-social behaviour; domestic violence; de-classification of the drugs cannabis and ecstasy; help and advice given to residents, particularly the vulnerable, on protection; benefits of third-party reporting sites and the problems encountered at some bus stations in Harrow.

The Borough Commander and the Portfolio Holder outlined the various measures that were already in place to combat these crimes. Drug usage was linked to increases in crime and Harrow did not suffer from high levels of Class A drug usage. The SNTs worked closely in this area and approximately 20 cannabis factories had been eradicated.

There had been a substantial increase in domestic violence when compared with the same period last year. More offences were being reported in this area and support was provided to the sufferers by police caseworkers. The Borough Commander agreed that early support at the beginning of an allegation was essential to reduce repeat crime and additional investment in domestic violence caseworkers was essential. In relation to the introduction of Third Party Reporting Sites, the Borough Commander stated that there was no evidence that this initiative was encouraging more reporting of hate or domestic violence crimes. Recent events in the Middle East had contributed to an increase in hate crime. The Borough Commander was pleased to report that Harrow benefited from experienced police officers adept at dealing with these types of crimes. A Member commented that virtual reporting ought to be encouraged.

Harrow's long-term investment in youth was paying off and it was important that the various initiatives were shared with other agencies. Early intervention, particularly in the case of young children, was crucial and a 'Firm and Fair Hand' approach with youths in schools had helped to reap benefits. The initiative Miss Dorothy.com had also contributed positively. Additionally, dedicated teams of police officers visited schools with a view to making pupils aware of all types of crime and educating them on the adverse effects of drugs.

Burglary Victim Packs had been produced and more work was required in this area. The PCSOs were active in delivering crime preventative measures to residents and reducing burglary rates was a high priority for them. The Borough Commander agreed to publicise schemes that were already in place for the elderly who had been victims of crime. He was of the view that prolific criminals did not appear to be deterred by the sentence structure. He informed the Committee that other initiatives such as the setting up of a contact point in the Civic Centre to allow residents to report crime to the police were being considered. Similar facilities were being considered at Kirkland House.

The Portfolio Holder reported that SmartWater was being offered to residents and the Council was seeking funding to SmartWater an entire Ward in Harrow.

In reference to crime on buses, the Borough Commander stated that certain bus routes had been prioritised by the police for special attention. Work with schools was under way. A team of police officers (Safer Transport Team) would be based in the Town Centre/Harrow Bus Station to address the problem of increased criminal activity in the vicinity of the hub.

The Borough Commander stated that a dedicated team of officers known as the 'Sapphire Team' investigated sexual offences. He was looking at other mechanisms that would encourage and help residents to report this type of crime.

Members praised the work carried out by Harrow's SNTs and the assurance they provided, particularly to the elderly.

Finally, in response to a question from a Member about the suitability of existing police stations in Harrow, the Borough Commander stated that a modern premises was needed but, due to the credit squeeze, it was unlikely that one would be provided in Harrow in the current climate.

The Chairman thanked the Borough Commander and the Portfolio Holder for their attendance.

490. **School Re-organisation Including Impact of 6th Form Re-Organisation on Colleges:**

The Chairman welcomed the Director of Schools and Children's Development to the meeting.

The Director of Schools and Children's Development introduced a report, which updated the Committee on the work undertaken to progress school re-organisation proposals in Harrow, including the impact of 6<sup>th</sup> Form re-organisation on colleges.

The Director outlined the proposals for school re-organisation in Harrow, the amalgamation policy, the development of 6<sup>th</sup> Form facilities at Harrow High Schools, government capital funding and the school admission criteria which were currently being consulted on. She responded to questions from Members and the representative of parent governors as follows:

- With regard to the receipt of capital funding from the government under the Building Schools for the Future proposals, the feedback, following a meeting with the Right Honourable Edward Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, had been positive. The Minister had been impressed with the all-party support for the change in the age of transfer in Harrow, including Harrow's clear vision on education. A concept design for each school had been presented to the Minister. The meeting was felt to be very positive.
- Capital development experience was essential and Harrow had successfully demonstrated its skills in this area under the One School Pathfinder initiative.
- It was not intended to expand popular schools, which were already over-subscribed, unless there was an overall demand for more places. Moreover, many popular schools were already situated on congested sites. The link school admission criterion had led to schools being over-subscribed, and the recent proposal to use distance from home to school as the admission criterion, if applied, would allow the authority to gauge demand better.

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

491. **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Adults and Housing, which briefed Members on the duty to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA was defined as "the means by which Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and local authorities would describe the future health, care and well-being needs of local populations and the strategic direction of service delivery to meet these needs".

The Chairman welcomed the author of the report to the meeting. The officer described the development of the JSNA and the work carried out by partner organisations towards its development. She outlined the key elements of JSNA and the emerging themes and described how gaps in information would be addressed. JSNA was an evolving process and would be built up over time. Both partners were responsible for taking the document and its recommendations forward. The Harrow Partnership Board would consider the document in March 2009.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the JSNA. In response, the officer stated that the JSNA was a strategic tool that had been developed as a planning aid for commissioners of services to use for service development and planning. Whilst JSNA was a 'living' document, it would be 'refreshed' on an annual basis, and at that stage, face to face interviews might be conducted with stakeholders to improve the range of feedback received from the recent consultation exercise.

Members were briefed on the outcome of the recent consultation exercise that had included focus groups with staff and members of a resident's panel and a questionnaire to 300 stakeholders. However, only 10 responses had been received by the deadline given. The consultation had taken place during the summer holiday period and at a time when there were staff vacancies at the PCT. Any future consultation activities would be planned during a non-holiday period when a higher response would be anticipated. The officer assured Members that the cost of publishing the JSNA would be shared between the Council and the PCT and a written agreement was in place to this effect.

The PCT and the Council would develop an action plan in order to take matters forward, and further explore the needs of the following groups identified by the JSNA:

- people who fund their own care provision;
- Asian groups who were under-represented in mental health services,
- needs of adults who were not users of any services;
- people who would like greater civic participation and community involvement.

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

(2) the key themes and areas of need that the JSNA identified, based on the health and well-being needs of the population of Harrow, be noted;

(3) the next steps of the JSNA process be noted.

492. **Report from Lead Members:**

The Scrutiny Policy Lead Member for Adult Health and Social Care reported orally on the meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) to review acute stroke and major trauma care services in London, which she had recently attended with a scrutiny officer.

The same Lead Member briefed the Committee of the discussions that had taken place at the JOSC meeting where poor co-ordination of services and governance arrangements in relation to the provision of acute stroke and major trauma care services in London had been highlighted. She reported that the decision on the location of trauma and acute stroke services would be dependant upon the outcome of the Healthcare for London consultation. In relation to the provision and location of acute stroke services in London, it was envisaged that seven stroke units would be sufficient, otherwise skills in this area would become diluted. Northwick Park Hospital had bid for all three levels of stroke care and was included as a 'preferred choice' stroke care site in the consultation document.

Members referred to the promotion that had been launched by the Primary Care Trust, which alerted people on how to recognise the symptoms of stroke. They were pleased with this initiative but expressed concern that the traffic in London might stop ambulances from reaching patients or hospitals on time. The time lag was critical, especially for patients suffering from stroke, as it was likely to determine their future quality of life.

The Scrutiny Performance Lead Member for Corporate Effectiveness and Finance reported that the outcomes from his meeting with the Policy Lead Member had been reported to the last meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 2009. Their next meeting was due to take place on 16 March 2009.

The Scrutiny Policy Lead Member for Safer and Stronger Communities reported on the issues discussed at his meeting with the Performance Lead Member. The Lead Members had received details of how the various policing bodies and groups in Harrow interacted with each other and reference was made to a document that had been produced in this regard, which was available from the scrutiny officers on request. There was a need to look at the 'stronger' and 'safer' elements of Harrow's communities, and discussions had also taken place in relation to the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA). In relation to the CCfA, Members expressed the need to avoid duplication of work amongst Members.

The Scrutiny Manager reiterated that government guidance on the CCfA was anticipated shortly, and that the Council had been approached by the IDeA to host the launch for it in London and the South East on 6 March 2009. Once the guidance had been received, a comprehensive report from officers setting out the Council's perspective would follow. She informed Members that the CCfA had to be implemented by all local authorities on 1 April 2009 and that reports would be submitted to the appropriate bodies, including a full meeting of the Council, once guidance was available. Members discussed the need for an interim written report to the next meeting of the Committee on the CCfA as this would help raise awareness of the matter. Some Members stated that information in this regard was already available, and that, in the interim, the Lead Members ought to keep a focus on the CCfA at their meetings. During further discussion on the CCfA, it was agreed that the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also be invited to meetings of the Policy and Performance Lead Members for Corporate Effectiveness and Finance.

The Policy Lead Member for Children and Young People reported on her meeting with the Performance Lead Member where the following matters had been discussed for inclusion on the agenda for the April 2009 Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Extended Schools Scrutiny Review; the Children's Trust; the Pan-London Pledge, which Harrow had signed up to; and the Adoption Inspection. For the future, the following matters needed addressing: Transition from Children's Care to Adult Services and Every Child Matters.

**RESOLVED:** That the reports from Lead Members be noted and that a report on the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) be submitted to a meeting of the Committee.

493. **Minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee Meeting held on 21 January 2009:**

In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 January 2009 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 the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee stated that the Minutes of the Sub-Committee were being presented to its parent Committee with a view to agreeing the actions arising. This new approach had commenced in November 2008 and the Sub-Committee's minutes would appear on future agendas as a standing item.

The Chairman of the Sub-Committee referred to Minute 111 on 'Housing Overview' and the discussion on Decent Homes and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). He expected to discuss the HRA further with the Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee and the Divisional Director of Housing in June 2009. By September 2009, they would expect to have examined the review of the HRA. The following key factors were of concern: 25% of HRA went towards financing the debt and 32% of it went out of the borough. He spoke about the need for local authorities to work together with a view to examining the joint disposal of properties.

The Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee asked that in the event that a Challenge Panel was convened on the HRA, Councillors who had expertise on housing issues to be invited to participate.

**RESOLVED:** That the actions arising from the minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 January 2009 be noted and, in so far as was necessary, agreed.

494. **Right to Manage:**

The Joint Chairs of the Right to Manage Challenge Panel introduced the report, which set out the findings of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on the Right to Manage in Harrow. The Challenge Panel had been commissioned to investigate a number of concerns expressed by some residents about the Right to Manage process and the conduct of the Independent Tenant Advisor, First Call.

The Joint Chairs thanked all those who had taken part in the Challenge Panel and the support received from the scrutiny officer. They stated that the recommendations reached by the Panel identified a way forward and encouraged the process to re-commence. As the remit of the Panel had been limited, it had been difficult to resolve some of the issues raised and any further work in relation to this matter would impinge on scrutiny's overall work programme. A significant finding of the Panel was the lack of effective communication amongst all parties involved.

Members welcomed the report and felt that this was a prime example of how scrutiny ought to conduct its business. Scrutiny was at its most effective when investigating residents' concerns. It was suggested that the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee receive a progress update in three months' time instead of the proposed six months. A Member of the Challenge Panel moved that a further recommendation highlighting lack of ownership be included in the recommendations, and supported the proposal that the report be submitted to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the report and the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on the Right to Manage in Harrow be endorsed;

(2) the following additional recommendation be included in the report of the Right to Manage Challenge Panel: That the Portfolio Holder advocate the need for increased quality assurance via the Housing Corporation or the Council's Adults and Housing Directorate;

(3) the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee monitor progress of the Right to Manage process and receive a progress update in three months' time;

(4) the report be submitted to the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet for information.

495. **Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Terms of Reference:**

The Scrutiny Manager apologised to Members for the delay in progressing this matter since the last meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 2009. As previously agreed, she undertook to liaise with Members outside of the meeting to produce an agreed version of the Terms of Reference prior to submitting this to the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To note that the report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 16 March 2009.

496. **Any Other Business:**

(i) **Scrutiny Budget – Proposed Savings**

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, this item was admitted late to the agenda to allow Members to be briefed on the savings proposed in relation to the scrutiny budget. This item had not been available at the time the agenda was despatched and circulated as the request for the item had been received from the Vice-Chairman a day prior to the meeting.

The Scrutiny Manager informed Members that the savings proposed fell in the following areas:

- The training and recruitment budget had been centralised within the Directorate. A sum of £16,000 of the total proposed savings of £20,000 in the scrutiny budget had been centralised. In response to a question, she stated that centralisation of the budget would not impact on the Member Development Budget;
- The following budget areas had been reduced: computer software, catering, staff travel expenses and miscellaneous, such as the cost of carrying out reviews.

In response to additional questions, she stated that staffing levels in the scrutiny team would not be affected by the proposed savings.

A Member commented that consideration ought to be given to providing refreshments for external guests at meetings.

(ii) **Place Survey**

The Scrutiny Manager undertook to ensure that the outcome of the Place Survey was reported to the Committee as previously agreed.

497. **Extension and Termination of Meeting:**  
In accordance with the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 6.6(ii) (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

**RESOLVED:** At (1) 10.00 pm to continue until 10.10 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 10.10 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR STANLEY SHEINWALD  
Chairman