



# GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**THURSDAY 22 JANUARY 2009  
7.30 PM**

**COMMITTEE AGENDA**

**COMMITTEE ROOM 5,  
HARROW CIVIC CENTRE**

**MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 3)**

**Chairman: Councillor John Cowan**

**Councillors:**

**Richard Romain  
Anthony Seymour  
Dinesh Solanki  
Jeremy Zeid**

**Archie Foulds (VC)  
Thaya Idaikkadar  
Bill Stephenson**

**Reserve Members:**

**1. Eric Silver  
2. –  
3. Manji Kara  
4. Tom Weiss  
5. Stanley Sheinwald**

**1. Keith Ferry  
2. Nizam Ismail  
3. Mano Dharmarajah**

**Issued by the Democratic Services Section,  
Legal and Governance Services Department**

**Contact: Pauline Ferris, Senior Professional - Democratic Services  
Tel: 020 8424 1269 E-mail: pauline.ferris@harrow.gov.uk**

***NOTE FOR THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING:  
IF YOU WISH TO DISPOSE OF THIS AGENDA, PLEASE LEAVE IT BEHIND AFTER THE MEETING.  
IT WILL BE COLLECTED FOR RECYCLING.***

**HARROW COUNCIL**

**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 22 JANUARY 2009**

**AGENDA - PART I**

1. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. **Declarations of Interest:**

To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Committee;
- (b) all other Members present in any part of the room or chamber.

3. **Minutes:** (Pages 1 - 4)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2008 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

4. **Public Questions:**

To receive questions (if any) from local residents/organisations under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 19 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

5. **Petitions:**

To receive petitions (if any) submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

6. **Deputations:**

To receive deputations (if any) under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 17 (Part 4B) of the Constitution.

7. **References from Council and other Committees/Panels:**

To receive references from Council and any other Committees or Panels (if any).

8. **CAA - Are Audit Committees Up To The Challenge?:** (Pages 5 - 14)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
9. **International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS):** (Pages 15 - 18)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
10. **Governance Update:** (Pages 19 - 24)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
11. **Emergency Planning - Stanley Road Explosion:** (Pages 25 - 50)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
12. **Exclusion of the Press and Public:**  
To resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of confidential information in breach of an obligation of confidence, or of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:

<u>Agenda Item No</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
13	Decent Homes – Asbestos Report	Information under paragraph 3, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
14	Kier Governance	Information under paragraph 3, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
15	Green and Amber Audit reports	Information under paragraph 3, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## **AGENDA - PART II**

13. **INFORMATION - Decent Homes Asbestos:** (Pages 51 - 124)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
14. **INFORMATION - Kier Governance:** (Pages 125 - 130)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
15. **INFORMATION - Green and Amber Audit Reports:** (Pages 131 - 196)  
Report of the Corporate Director of Finance attached.
16. **Any Other Urgent Business:**  
Which cannot otherwise be dealt with.

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**REPORT OF GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

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**(SPECIAL) MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2008**

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Chairman: \* Councillor John Cowan

Councillors: \* Archie Foulds \* Eric Silver (1)  
\* Thaya Idaikkadar \* Dinesh Solanki  
\* Manji Kara (2) \* Bill Stephenson  
\* Anthony Seymour

\* Denotes Member present  
(1) and (2) Denote category of Reserve Members

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**

**PART II - MINUTES**

58. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Richard Romain  
Councillor Jeremy Zeid

Councillor Eric Silver  
Councillor Manji Kara

59. **Declarations of Interest:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that Councillor Bill Stephenson declared a personal interest in Item 14 (Exempt Appendix 3) but considered that he could still speak and vote thereon.

60. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

61. **Public Questions, Petitions & Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions, petitions or deputations were received under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rules 19, 16 and 17 respectively.

62. **References from Council and other Committees/Panels:**

There were none.

63. **Mid-Year Governance Report 2008/09:**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Finance detailing the mid-year Corporate Governance position and progress against the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Action Plan. It was noted that specific areas of assurance had been agreed to be added to the new governance framework to cover arrangements for dealing with Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection; arrangements for absence management and equalities.

Members were further advised that an assimilation of actions within the previous framework had been added to the current Action Plan.

During discussion Members commented that:

- within training the issue of Member development need further consideration and opportunity;
- point 3.13 – there was no separate mention of trade unions and their statutory responsibility in respect of health and safety. Officers advised that this was not an area that was considered a gap but noted this for future plans;
- the Kier Review report should be submitted to the next committee;

- should consideration be given to the Primary Care Trust being identified separately from the Harrow Strategic Partnership group as a significant partner to the authority;
- the Quarter 3 update report be submitted to the next committee;
- point 3.3 – had the whistleblowing arrangements been communicated to staff. Officers confirmed that this had been achieved and that the issue of monitoring was currently under consideration.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted and the identified actions and improvements be agreed, subject to obtaining the necessary consents.

64. **Audit & Risk Group Functions - Update:**

Members were advised of the current and future work streams being undertaken by the Audit & Risk Group relating to Insurance Service; Internal Audit Service; Business Risk Management; Business Continuity Planning & Emergency Planning and Health & Safety.

In response to questions officers confirmed that the Decent Homes Asbestos report would be submitted to the next Committee. It was similarly also agreed that the report concerning the Stanley Road incident should also be considered at the next meeting. Members referred to these significant incidents impacting upon individual Wards, noting that it was essential that Ward Members were kept abreast of the issues. It was also noted that there was a training need to be met in respect of Members role in ensuring that the community were aware of the situation.

Referring to the non-appointment to the post of Insurance Manager officers confirmed that a job evaluation exercise had now been completed and it was anticipated the post would be readvertised shortly.

In considering the Interim Health & Safety statistics half-year position Members requested that the figures be compiled in terms of the percentage rate of the workforce which would assist in identifying vulnerable workforce areas within future reports.

**RESOLVED:** That the current work areas and planned key improvements, as set out in the report, be noted;

(2) the current position with respect to addressing the asbestos issues be noted and the full Decent Homes Asbestos report be submitted to the next Committee;

(3) the similar report in respect of the incident at Stanley Road also be submitted to the next Committee.

65. **Internal Audit Mid-Year Report 2008/09:**

The Corporate Director of Finance submitted her report setting out progress against the 2008/09 Annual Plan and the work undertaken by the Internal Audit team in the first half of the year. The arrangements for the completion of the IT Plan were outlined and it was confirmed that in respect of schools officers advised the internal audit process had been completed, with the external FMSIS assessments to commence during February 2009.

In response to a request the Corporate Director agreed to send the S106 report identified in the item to the Members who expressed an interest. Members then congratulated the Audit Team on the work programme undertaken.

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

66. **Role of Lead Members & Officers:**

Members discussed a report which considered the current role of Lead Members of the Committee and potential changes to those arrangements. Following an examination of the various options available it was agreed that the individual Lead Member roles identified be retained but, that where such Lead Members held briefings with officers these should be communicated to the full membership of the Committee should any Councillor wish to sit in on the briefing. The Committee confirmed that it did not wish to establish formal sub-committees at this time.

The Corporate Director advised that a Lead Member for Anti-Fraud work would also be welcome and Members considered who should undertake this work area.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the working arrangements be agreed to continue as currently operating with Lead Member's acting for the Committee's main areas of responsibility, subject to future briefing to Lead Members being communicated to all Members of the Committee;

(2) Councillor Anthony Seymour be confirmed the Lead Member for Anti-Fraud work.

67. **Exclusion of the Press and Public:**

**RESOLVED:** That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item for the reasons set out below:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reason</u>
10	Internal Audit Mid-Year report 2008/09 – Appendix 3	Paragraphs 1 (information relating to individuals) and 7 (information relating to actions taken in connection with the prevention. Investigation and prosecution of crime) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

68. **Internal Audit Mid-Year - Appendix 3:**

The Committee noted the content of Appendix 3 in relation to Minute 65 above.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.30 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JOHN COWAN  
Chairman

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Meeting:	Governance, Audit & Risk Management Committee
Date:	22nd January 2009
Subject:	<b>CAA – Are Audit Committees Up To The Challenge?</b>
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Myfanwy Barrett – Corporate Director of Finance
Portfolio Holder:	David Ashton – Council Leader, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership & Finance
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 - CAA Report – Are Audit Committees Up To The Challenge?

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides feedback from a one-day learning event hosted by the London Borough of Croydon.

### **Recommendations:**

The Committee is requested to:

Consider the key messages and questions for the Audit Committee outlined in the feedback report and decide if the GARM Committee needs to take any specific action in preparation for Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

### **Reason: (For recommendation)**

To prepare for the introduction of CAA from April 2009

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 On the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 the Divisional Director Audit & Risk and the Service Manager Internal Audit attended a one day learning event hosted by the London Borough of Croydon.
- 2.2 At the event guest speakers discussed key aspects of the Audit Committees' role in light of the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. This included traditional areas of audit, risk management and fraud in addition to the increasing importance of partnership governance. See Appendix 1 for full report.

### **Key Messages**

- 2.3 The following were the key messages of the event:
- Audit Committees need to consider how to get assurance regarding value for money achievements, outputs and outcomes, not just for the organisation itself, but also in relation to other organisations, partnerships etc.
  - Management of authorities' strategic partnerships are key to success under the CAA regime and Audit Committee play an important role in this. Audit Committees need to consider their role in relation to their authority's strategic partnerships.
- 2.4 By way of a practical example to address this second point, the Committee could request the strategic partners to prepare a self-assessed assurance statement for consideration by the Committee which could be fed into the Annual Governance Statement.

### **Legal Implications**

- 2.5 None.

### **Financial Implications**

- 2.6 None.

### **Performance Issues**

- 2.7 Potential for the GARM Committee to improve its performance ready for CAA.

### **Risk Management Implications**

- 2.8 Potential risk of the GARM Committee being ill prepared for the introduction of CAA from April 2009.

### Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Myfanwy Barrett.....  Chief Financial Officer

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Name: Helen White.....  On behalf of Monitoring Officer

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> January 2009.....

### Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Susan Dixson, Service Manager, Internal Audit  
Tel: 020 8424 1420

Background Papers: None

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## CAA – Are audit Committees up to the challenge?

### Introduction

- 1 On the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 the Divisional Director Audit & Risk and the Service Manager Internal Audit attended a one day learning event hosted by Croydon Council and chaired by Councillor Yvette Hopley, Croydon's Audit Committee Chair.
- 2 Croydon have impressively moved from a 2 out of 4 Use of Resources score in 2006 on Internal Control to a 4 out of 4 score in 2007.
- 3 At the event, guest speakers discussed key aspects of the Audit Committees' role in the light of the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. This included traditional areas of audit, risk management and fraud in addition to the increasing importance of partnership governance.

### National Fraud Strategic Authority and Public Sector Fraud

- 4 The first speaker was from the National Fraud Strategic Authority (NFSA). Their remit is to design an integrated response to fraud – a managed programme across the whole pipeline of counter fraud activity, to challenge fraud in an effective, targeted, joined-up way. They aim to:
  - Identify and manage strategic gaps, risks & dependencies
  - Challenge the performance of the counter fraud community
  - Identify, track & communicate the benefits realised
  - Resolve disputes on delivering the national fraud programme
  - Remove barriers to effective joint action
  - Remove duplication of effort
  - Identify when resources need to be reallocated across the national fraud programme.
- 5 The speaker stressed the key role played by Audit Committees in countering fraud as outlined by both CIPFA and Alarm as follows:
- 6 Audit Committees ... are a key source of assurance about the organisation's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, and reporting on financial and non-financial performance.  
CIPFA (Audit Panel)
- 7 Poor corporate governance weakens an authority's potential and ... can pave the way for financial difficulties, poor performance, loss of reputation, **fraud** and corruption.  
CIPFA (Toolkit for Audit Committee)

## CAA – Are audit Committees up to the challenge?

- 8 Managing the risk of fraud ... is of the highest importance for public sector organizations.  
ALARM

### Aligning Assurance Activities - Deloitte

- 9 The speaker emphasised the traditional duties of the Audit Committee in covering the following areas:
- Internal audit process
  - External audit process
  - Counter fraud and corruption arrangements
  - Risk management
- 10 With regard to the Assurance Framework the speaker stressed that the key areas of concern for the Audit Committee should be:
- ensuring systematic appraisal of the control environment and framework of internal control to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations
  - ensuring the highest standards of probity and public accountability are demonstrated
  - reviewing arrangements by which staff may, in confidence, raise concerns about possible improprieties, together with arrangements for the independent investigation of such matters
  - reviewing external reports and assessments, which feed into the organisation's assurance framework
  - considering by committee, a programme of areas for scrutiny
- 11 The Audit Committee should also receive and review reports on all aspects of internal control on behalf of the board. However, it is important that the Audit Committee does not duplicate the work of senior management or of any risk management committee.
- 12 Generally, a preferred model would be for the Audit Committee to act as a co-ordinating forum for these interrelated assurance activities and ensure that agreed recommendations on internal control or audit are actually implemented.
- 13 The speaker stressed the following two key issues:
- *The recent COSO exposure draft 'Guidance on Monitoring Internal Control Systems' and the revisiting of 'monitoring effectiveness' - how will the AC get better assurance on the 'effectiveness of controls' from the first and*

## CAA – Are audit Committees up to the challenge?

*second layers of defence, and if this involves the redesign of controls, what is IA (and EA) role etc (article in Internal auditing Oct '08 refers)?*

- *Comprehensive Area assessment (CAA) – how will the AC get assurance regarding value for money achievements, outputs and outcomes, not just for the organisation itself, but also in relation to other organisations, partnerships etc?*

## Good Governance in Operational and Strategic Partnerships – Audit Commission

14 The speaker emphasised that the principles of good governance, as follows, are now widely shared across the public sector:

- Focus on purpose and outcomes
- Effective performance - clearly defined roles
- Values & behaviours
- Informed transparent decisions & managing risk
- Capacity & capability
- Engagement & accountability (**particularly in partnerships**)

15 Thinking about the quality of partnerships is not new: “Joint undertakings stand a better chance when they benefit both sides” Euripides, 400BC.

16 Partnerships have been a major driver of government policy in recent years and the Audit Commissions main messages about partnerships have been as follows since 2005:

- Partnerships bring risks as well as opportunities
  - Who manages partnership risks?
- Partnerships bring costs as well as benefits
  - How (and when) do partnerships add value?
- Partnerships find it hard to engage the public
  - Does this matter to service users?
- The principles of good governance are harder to apply in partnerships
  - Who is accountable to whom, and for what?

17 The Audit commission encouraged organisations to think more broadly about accountability in partnerships - *“Shared responsibility should never mean diminished accountability.”*

18 They also encouraged organisations to think about how well they managed the risks in partnerships:

- The role of corporate governance
- The challenges of integration
- The need for high quality data

**CAA – Are audit Committees up to the challenge?**

- The importance of leadership in partnership

19 All joint working is difficult: the whole system needs to work well:

- Standards/regulations – rules for managing the partnership and its impact
- Systems guiding local decision making – systems to understand and influence risks, performance, and resources
- Synergies working across boundaries - informal and formal social networks, shared services and efficiency projects
- Style/ways of working - management and role of LSP meetings
- Staff and skills, leadership, culture and development - ability and competence of political and officer leaders, LSP support staff skills
- Steering/enabling - performance and finance sub-groups, influence on mainstream spend, pooled or aligned funding
- Super- ordinate goals/wellbeing - improved health and community cohesion are examples of LSP goals

20 The LSP study national report and improvement products provide details about good practice across all 7 elements.

21 LSPs need a layered approach to performance and resource management although some areas have confused the layers.

22 The purpose of an Audit Committee ‘..... *to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the authority’s financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority’s exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.*’

23 Audit committee responsibilities in respect of partnerships are as follows:

- Council activities
  - Is the Committee aware of the nature and extent of the authority’s partnerships?
- Internal control
  - Are appropriate governance arrangements in place for all the Council’s significant partnerships?
  - Are these arrangements reviewed by internal audit?
  - Do the arrangements deliver value for money?
  - Do partnerships deliver the intended outcomes for the Council?
- Risk management
  - Has the risk of delivering services through each of the Council’s partnerships been assessed?



**CAA – Are audit Committees up to the challenge?**

- Financial reporting
  - Are governance arrangements reported in the Annual Governance Statement
  - Are the financial results of all key partnerships appropriately reported?

24 The audit and inspection regime assesses partnerships in the following ways:

- Comprehensive area assessment
  - Joined up assessment for joined up local services
  - Focus on outcomes for local people within an area and prospects for improvement
  - Challenging for local partners
- Organisational assessment
  - Assessment of value for money and performance at an organisational level
  - Focus on achievements, outputs and outcomes
  - Includes liaison with stakeholders and delivery through partnership
- Audit of financial statements
  - Annual governance statement
  - Reporting financial results of partners

25 Questions for Audit Committees

- How can your committee best support your council's work in partnerships?
- Do you discuss partnership issues with your counterparts in other public sector bodies?
- Are you aware of the partnerships your council is involved in?
- Are you satisfied that your council's governance arrangements include significant partnerships?
- Do you have access to robust performance and financial data about your partnerships?

26 The speaker stressed that the Audit Commission will focus on authorities' strategic partnerships rather than commercial partnerships.

**Embedding Risk Management: New LSP & LAA Arrangements - Croydon Case Study**

27 Risk workshops were used as a way of embedding risk management in Croydon's local strategic partnership (LSP). The risk workshops were used to:

**CAA – Are audit Committees up to the challenge?**

- Engage with LSP Executive or Board
- Engage with partnership managers
- Engage with other agencies
- Be democratic

28 The following common risk themes were identified as a result of the workshops:

- Lack of human resources to support the partnership
- Lack of financial resources to deliver key strategies
- Lack of consistent communication throughout the partnership and to the public
- Emphasis on short term goals at expense of long term investment
- Competing priorities from central government versus local, and between agencies
- Inconsistent performance management and quality of data
- Structure of the partnership and governance arrangements not fit for purpose
- Partnerships not maximising opportunities to work closely with other themes of LSP
- Stability and consistency of partners committing to partnership working
- Inability to understand the needs and engage with the wider community (hard to reach groups)
- Capacity and funding issues with voluntary sector
- Current commissioning framework is unclear

29 Risk registers and action plans to manage risks were also developed as a result of the workshops.

Susan Dixon  
Service Manager, Internal Audit  
December 2008



<b>Meeting:</b>	Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	22 January 2009
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Myfanwy Barrett: Corporate Director of Finance
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	David Ashton (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance)
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	None

## Section 1: Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the implications of implementing International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

### **Recommendations:**

Note the implications of implementing IFRS.

### **Reason**

To inform members of the changes to the accounting standards which has an impact on the Council's Statement of Accounts

## Section 2: Report

1. International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) represents a significant change in financial reporting across government and the public sector and are soon to become part of the way in which government reports its financial results. The move to IFRS in government is part of a process of aligning public sector financial reporting with what is seen to be the highest standards of financial reporting.

2. Local authorities will move to accounting on an IFRS basis by 2010-11, with restated comparative figures for the previous year and a restated opening balance sheet at 1 April 2009. The move to IFRS is a challenge for all organisations as it will affect many areas of the organisation and will impact on budgeting, investment decisions, performance targets as well as financial reporting. Process and system changes will be needed.
3. One of the lessons learned from the private sector experience was that IFRS affects all parts of the organisation. It is not just a finance issue. Some of the key changes to the accounts are highlighted below. These differences will not affect all organisations in the same way, and this certainly cannot be seen to be a complete list. However, it provides a flavour of the main areas of financial impact and difficulty of implementation.
  - a. Operating Segments
  - b. Leases of land and buildings
  - c. Valuation of fixed assets
  - d. Private Finance Initiative
  - e. Financial instruments
  - f. Employee benefits – Untaken paid holiday accruals
  - g. Impairment of assets
  - h. More disclosures – It is expected that the financial statements will increase by 60% in size
4. A methodical approach to the IFRS conversion process is important in achieving success. The recommended best practice is to set up a project management process to enable good management of the transition period.
5. Currently meetings are being held with various consultants who provide specialist service in this area. A progress report will be submitted to the committee in April 2009.

### **Financial Implications**

6. There will be implications of funding this and seeking to do this within available resources.

### **Performance Issues**

7. The timeliness and accuracy of the completion of the accounts impacts the Use of Resources score on Financial Reporting which feeds into the overall CPA score. It is essential that the Council is able to demonstrate good financial reporting and continues to improve its score in this area. The implementation of the IFRS will increase pressure on improving the score.

### **Risk Management Implications**

8. None in relation to this report.

### Section 3: Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jennifer Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of the Chief Finance Officer
Date: 09 January 09		
Name: Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 09 January 09		

### Section 4: Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Tom Whiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Performance Officer
09 January 09		

### Section 5: Contact details and background papers

**Contact:** Hasina Shah (Finance Business Partner – Accounting, Treasury and Pension Fund) tel: 020-8424-1573

**Background Papers:** None

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Meeting:	Governance, Audit & Risk Management Committee
Date:	22nd January 2009
Subject:	<b>Governance Update Report</b>
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Myfanwy Barrett – Corporate Director of Finance
Portfolio Holder:	David Ashton – Council Leader, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership & Finance
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix: Standards Committee Reference

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an update on governance for Harrow Council required to meet the requirements of CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and good corporate governance.

Recommendations: **That the Committee**

- (1) note the report and consider the issues raised by Standards Committee and agree what action, if any, should be taken in response;
- (2) recommend the Code of Corporate Governance to full Council for adoption as part of the Constitution.

**Reason: (For recommendation)**

To confirm the Council's approach to Corporate Governance and demonstrate our commitment to uphold the highest standards of integrity, openness and accountability. To comply with the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance, which constitutes 'proper practice' under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 At its last meeting the committee asked officers to provide a regular update on governance. This report therefore sets out progress and issues arising since the Mid-year Governance Report.

### **Code of Corporate Governance**

- 2.2 The Code of Corporate Governance was approved by the GARM Committee on 01/09/08. The committee agreed that the code should be incorporated into the Council's Constitution and to facilitate this, the Code was taken to the Standards Committee on 04/12/08.
- 2.3 The Standards Committee agreed to the inclusion of the Code of Corporate Governance in the Constitution subject to points raised by the Standards Committee being referred back to the GARM Committee. See reference attached.
- 2.4 The Standards Committee members expressed concern that procedures for which the Committee are accountable are being signed off as part of the annual governance review without it (the Committee), having been part of the review process. Reliance is placed solely on evidence found in minutes and provided by officers. To address this concern it is recommended that a self assessed assurance statement is developed for completion by the Standards Committee on an annual basis to feed into the annual governance review.
- 2.5 The process for adoption of the Code was also queried, and the Standards Committee was of the view that consideration should be given to consultation with other relevant parties, such as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman of the Constitution Review Working Group, prior to its submission to Council. To address this it is recommended that the Code be referred to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting and to the Chair of the Constitution Review Working Group prior to being referred to Council in April. The Committee should be aware that this will delay the formal adoption of the Code within the current financial year.
- 2.6 Some minor wording issues were also highlighted by the Standards Committee (see reference) which the GARM Committee should agree whether or not to implement.

### **The Annual Governance Statement – One Year On**

- 2.7 The Service Manager, Internal Audit attended a seminar run by the CIPFA Better Governance Forum entitled Annual Governance Statement – One year on. The seminar programme covered the following presentations:



- Going forward with good governance – presented by the Office for Public Management
- Regulator’s perspective – presented by the Audit Commission
- Assurance framework for the Director of Finance – presented by Leeds Council
- The Rough Guide, the AGS and the system of internal audit

2.8 The key message from the Audit Commission on what makes a ‘good’ governance statement was one that is:

- Open, honest and credible
- Not necessarily ‘clean’
- Linked to embedded assurance framework
- End product of annual process

### **Quarter 3 Update**

2.9 Updates are currently being obtained from officers on progress made in quarter 3 (October – December) towards the 2007/08 AGS agreed actions.

### **Management Assurance Exercise**

2.10 Work has begun on the 2008/09 Management Assurance exercise as follows:

- Internal Audit have reviewed the Strategic Risk Register, the Governance Framework and consulted with key officers on the areas of assurance. These will be updated as appropriate and agreed with the Corporate Governance Group before issuing the self-assessments to managers for completion in February.
- The implementation of agreed actions from the 2007/08 exercise are currently being followed-up and will, for the first time, be reported on separately.
- Action will be taken in January 2009 to raise the profile of the Management Assurance exercise to ensure that managers are ready to undertake the self-assessments in February and understand how the exercise feeds into the governance framework.

### **Chair of Corporate Governance Group**

2.8 The chair of the Corporate Governance Group has been passed to the Director of Legal and Governance Services by the Corporate Director of Corporate Finance as part of an agreed rotation.

### **Legal Implications**

2.6 None.

## Financial Implications

2.11 None.

## Performance Issues

2.12 Inclusion of the Code of Corporate Governance in the Constitution will enhance the Council's governance arrangements and feed into the Use of Resources score.

## Risk Management Implications

2.13 A significant proportion of the Code of Governance deals directly with Risk Management. If the council does not have an approved Code of Governance we will not be complying with the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and may be criticised by the External Auditor, although as a robust Governance Framework is in place this risk is minimal. There is also a risk that without the Code being part of the Constitution the wider community will lack confidence in our governance arrangements.

## Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Myfanwy Barrett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2009		
Name: Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of Monitoring Officer
Date: 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2009		

## Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Susan Dixson, Service Manager, Internal Audit  
Tel: 020 8424 1420

Background Papers: None

## HARROW COUNCIL

### GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2009

#### Reference from the Standards Committee meeting held on 4 December 2008: Code of Corporate Governance

1. At its meeting on 4 December 2008, the Standards Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Finance, which sought the Committee's agreement to the inclusion in the Constitution of a Code of Corporate Governance for Harrow Council, which had already been approved by the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee on 1 September 2008.
2. It was noted that different parts of the Code fell within the remit of various bodies, including the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee, the Standards Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but that responsibility for the different parts of the Code was not specified. The way in which the Code would be implemented was queried. The meeting was advised that implementation was via the management assurance process which was already in place, and which sought evidence from managers that appropriate governance procedures were in use. This fed into the annual governance statement which was signed off and included as part of the Authority's statement of accounts. Members expressed concern that procedures for which the Committee was accountable were being signed off without it having been part of the review process. It was felt that further consideration should be given to the way in which the Code was implemented.
3. The process for adoption of the Code was also queried, and the Committee was of the view that consideration should be given to consultation with other relevant parties, such as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman of the Constitution Review Working Group, prior to its submission to Council.
4. There was some discussion as to whether, in light of the increasing emphasis on partnership working, the principle set out in paragraph 2.5, "Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective", should be extended to include the development of capacity and capability in the voluntary sector. It was noted, however, that the Code was for the use of Council Members and officers, and that provisions relating to partnership working were set out under paragraph 2.2. It was agreed that this issue also be referred to the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee for consideration. In addition, a correction to the heading of paragraph 2.4 to read "Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and the management of risk" was suggested in order to make it read better.
5. The Committee **RESOLVED**: To (1) agree to the inclusion of the Code of Corporate Governance in the Council's Constitution; and  
  
(2) refer the comments of the Committee, as set out above, to the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee for consideration.

#### FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Papers: No unpublished documents.

Contact: Claire Vincent, Democratic Services, tel: 020 8424 1637,  
e-mail: [claire.vincent@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:claire.vincent@harrow.gov.uk)

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Meeting:	Governance, Audit & Risk Management Committee
Date:	22nd January 2009
Subject:	<b>Emergency Planning – Stanley Road Explosion</b>
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Myfanwy Barrett – Corporate Director of Finance
Portfolio Holder:	David Ashton – Council Leader, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership & Finance
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix : Anonymised Version of the Stanley Road Incident Report as sent to London Councils.

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report was requested by the Committee at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Committee notes the Council's response to the Stanley Road incident, the lessons learnt and progress against the action plan.

### **Reason: (For recommendation)**

To provide assurance around the Council's emergency response arrangements and progress against the improvement actions identified.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008 the Committee requested a progress report on the Stanley Road emergency response. This was in the context of the role of Members during a major incident.

### **The Role of a Member during a Major Incident**

- 2.2 Members have an important role to play during a critical or major incident. This role needs to be clearly defined so that the areas of operational command and control do not become blurred with the duty to represent residents and local business issues and concerns.
- 2.3 Annual training on Emergency Planning specifically for Members has been arranged within the Member Development Programme, entitled, “The role of a Member during a Major Incident”. The first scheduled session will be held on the evening of Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009.
- 2.4 This training module has been developed using best practice from our neighbouring boroughs in the West London Alliance and also the shared emergency planning standards across the 33 local authorities in Greater London.

The training session will explain the following:

- Command and control during a major incident
  - Strategic management and decision making
  - Tactical deployment of resources
  - Operational arrangements on the ground
  - Concept of operations
  - Common procedures and joint working with the emergency services
  - Dos and Don'ts for Members.
- 2.5 Full training handouts to accompany the session will be provided. This will include an aide memoir consisting of a short briefing note to assist Members during an incident. This will also be incorporated into the Major Incident Plan to be issued to Members during a critical or major incident.
- 2.6 The session will consist of an interactive presentation on the above emergency planning procedures and roles, full handouts, and a question and answer session. Member support is requested for this event to maximise the benefit to Members and the community they serve.

### **Borough Emergency Control Centre**

- 2.7 The venue of the Borough Emergency Control Centre (BECC) is under review. The current venue is also a meeting room which presents difficulties with the storage and maintenance of IT equipment and office peripherals. A better set up is currently being investigated where four PCs could be permanently housed.

## **Review of Departmental Emergency Plans**

2.8 The review of departmental emergency planning and business continuity plans has begun. This will be conducted during spring 2009. This will also link into the recruitment of additional Emergency Response Officers, as Directors will be tasked with identifying key departmental representatives.

## **Homelessness and Welfare Policy During a Major Incident**

2.9 The Housing, Adults and Children's departments are all conducting reviews of their current policies on dealing with people during a major incident. These policies will be revised following the explosion at Stanley Road.

## **Recruitment of Emergency Response Officers**

2.10 The recruitment of more Emergency Response Officers (ERO) is well underway. A further four have joined the current 12 officers. Directors will be asked to nominate departmental representatives during the review of their emergency procedures during spring 2009

## **Improvement of IT Provision**

2.11 The provision of IT has been improved during autumn 2008, with better drive set up and accessibility to shared documents.

## **Legal Implications**

2.12 The Civil Contingencies Act places a duty on Local Authorities to effectively plan for and respond to major incidents as "category one" responders.

## **Financial Implications**

2.13 The improvements set out in this report will be carried out within existing council resources.

## **Performance Issues**

2.14 Business continuity and emergency planning arrangements are part of the annual Use of Resources inspection carried out by the Audit Commission.

## **Risk Management Implications**

2.15 Managing corporate emergency planning risks is an integral function of the Audit and Risk Group and a major incident scenario is one of the strategic risks that the authority needs to manage through thorough planning and preparedness.

### Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Myfanwy Barrett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2009		
Name: Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of Monitoring Officer
Date: 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2009		

### Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: David Ward, Divisional Director, Audit & Risk  
Tel: 020 8424 1781



## Anonymised

### Incident at Local Road on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008

#### REPORT

##### Brief background

The Council responded to the explosion at Local Road on the night of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008, where one person died and two people were seriously injured. Three houses were totally destroyed, two houses were seriously damaged and many other properties within a 150-metre radius were damaged to varying degrees.

##### Key achievements

- Overall the Council responded very effectively to the incident
- The Police, Fire Brigade and other responders were pleased with our assistance
- Local residents were cared for and accommodated that night, no one slept in a rest centre
- The Council's Major Incident Plan was tested under live conditions
- Good communication were maintained from the Council to residents and media

##### Key lessons learnt

- The Council needs a permanent Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC) in line with the other London Boroughs (draft Minimum Standard for London)
- More trained Emergency Response Officers (ERO) are required
- More staff on duty Out Of Hours (OOH) in housing and social services. On call staff are required from communications, finance and IT
- Clarification is required on housing and social services policies on what will and wont be provided during an emergency/ major incident
- Departmental emergency plans/ contact lists/ duty rotas need to be updated so that they reflect the resources that are available

#### BACKGROUND

##### Structured response

The council's emergency response to the incident continued for 9 days. The council's Major Incident Plan was invoked and the Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC) was opened.

The Duty Director and the Emergency Planning Officer attended meetings with the Police Borough Commander and other emergency responders at the Police Station. At these "Gold" meetings policy and strategy was decided.

In the Boardroom, regular "Silver" meetings were held each day to update heads of service on policy and strategy decisions, and to inform on tactical plans. From the Silver meetings, instructions were given to officers on the ground, at the "Bronze" or operational level.

There was some occasional blurring of roles between Gold level strategy and Silver/ Bronze operational work. In February 2008, a Strategic Emergency Management one day training session was arranged for Directors. This should be an annual training event to assist Directors keep up to date with emergency planning doctrine and strategic emergency management developments.

### Borough Emergency Command Centre

The BECC was staffed by the council's pool of 12 Emergency Response Officers (ERO). The EROs are middle managers that have been trained in incident management and liaison. The EROs also attend regular joint training with the Cabinet Office, London Fire Brigade and Metropolitan Police, on dealing with a major incident.

It became apparent after just 2 days that a pool of 12 EROs was insufficient for the council's needs. The BECC and deployed EROs were operating a shift system to provide cover 18 hours per day (6 am to 12 midnight).

Under the various statutory guidance and emergency services protocols, each London Borough is required to have a Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC), to be used during a major incident.

Most of the London Boroughs have a permanent room that is set up as a BECC that can be used immediately after a major incident has been declared. The Council is in the unusual position of having a temporary BECC that can be set up in the Boardroom of the Civic Centre.

The BECC is set up according to a set format agreed by the London Resilience Forum and the Cabinet Office. The BECC consists of the following key positions, which are staffed by EROs:

- Incident Manager
- Information Co-ordinator
- Logistics Co-ordinator
- Operations Co-ordinator
- Welfare Co-ordinator
- Loggist
- Admin Officer

A pool of 12 Emergency Response Officers (ERO) were recruited in 2004 and currently perform a number of roles:

- Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO)
- First point of contact and activation officer in major incidents
- Rest Centre Manager
- Borough Emergency Control Centre staff

We currently have 12 EROs within the council. This is adequate if an incident lasts for one day. However, this incident continued for 9 days, and we were unable to properly staff the BECC after the first 2 days.

The BECC and LALO roles require 6 EROs per shift. As we were running shifts to cover a 16-hour period, our resources were soon exhausted, and we were forced to reduce staffing levels to 2 EROs in the BECC per shift. This put additional strain on already tired colleagues, and would have been unworkable during a London-wide incident such as 7/7.

## Individual departmental emergency plans

Each individual department is required to have emergency plans in place that fit into the corporate Major Incident Plan. During the incident, it became apparent that some of these plans were out of date.

The following departments were directly involved in the emergency response:

- One Stop Shop
- Adults & Housing Directorate
- Adult Services
- Catering Services
- Children's Services
- Communications Team
- Community & Environment Directorate
- Emergency Planning Team
- Engineering Services
- Housing Department
- Public Realm Services

These departments called on staff to assist with the incident. Though much of this was based on goodwill. This placed additional strains on departments that were already running on minimum staffing levels, for example the housing and social services emergency duty team for nights and weekends.

There is a need to review departmental emergency plans, contact lists and duty rotas; some of which appeared to be out of date. Consideration should also be given to payment for on call duty personnel to be able to respond to Out Of Hours incidents.

## Information Technology

There were some IT issues within the BECC set up, concerning access to drives, sharing data and formatting of laptops. Some of these issues were not resolved until Day 6 of the incident.

If the incident had been on a larger scale, perhaps multi site across some neighbouring boroughs, this would have caused severe problems for the corporate incident management team in communicating with other boroughs and central government.

The Emergency Planning Department recently took part in a London-wide exercise – Exercise Safer City 2008. The temporary BECC set up and inadequate IT set up adversely affected our participation in this important annual government sponsored event.

## Policy on accommodation and social care response

There was some confusion over what level of accommodation was to be provided for residents who were evacuated and had nowhere to go. This identified a need for a clear hierarchy of options within the policy on temporary accommodation – in other words, friends/ relatives are first port of call, anything provided by insurer is second, and accommodation provided by Council third.

There was also some confusion on the issuing of cash packets to displaced residents without clothes or toiletries. There needs to be a review of policy on dealing with residents who have

been affected by an emergency/ major incident; and a clarification of the communication channels so that officers on the ground are made aware of policy decisions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Annual one day training event on Strategic Emergency Management for Directors
- A permanent Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC) to be established, rather than a temporary BECC set up in the Boardroom
- A review of departmental emergency plans to include duty personnel and contact phone numbers. The need for Out Of Hours (OOH) duty personnel in all departments with on call payments for duty personnel as required
- A review of departmental policy guidelines during a major incident for homelessness and welfare to include the issue of cash packets, food, drinks, clothes and toiletries for displaced residents
- Directorates to provide more volunteer Emergency Response Officers (ERO). Currently there is a pool of 12 officers. Increase this number to 36 EROs
- Review of IT for major incidents. The current IT set up did not work properly. Require a central drive/ secure intranet/ secure website for all ERO documents to facilitate information sharing and shift handovers

## ACTION PLAN

Recommendation	Action by	Due by
Establish a permanent BECC	Facilities Management	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2008
Review departmental emergency plans	Directors	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2009
Review of housing and social services policies on major incidents	Housing Department Adult Services Children's Services	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2008
Increase number of EROs to 36. Each Directorate to nominate 5 managers to be EROs	Directors	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2008
Improvement of IT set up for the BECC	IT Service	28 <sup>th</sup> November 2008

Progress against these actions is covered in the covering report.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Council's overall response to the incident at Local Road was very effective and positive. However, the incident and response highlighted some shortcomings and room for improvement.

This incident was located on one site with 66 residents evacuated. The Council needs to be prepared for the possibility of an incident on multi sites, such as the 7/7 bombings, or the possibility of an incident involving large-scale evacuation, such as unexploded ordnance or acetylene cylinders.

This extra resilience and preparedness can be achieved by establishing a permanent BECC, increasing the number of trained EROs and updating departmental emergency plans.

### Contact

Emergency Planning Officer

### Background papers

Appendix 1: Incident timeline – key events

Appendix 2: Feedback reports from individual departments

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## **Appendix 1: Incident timeline – key events**

### **Wed 7<sup>th</sup> May**

On Wed night the council's Duty Emergency Response Officer (ERO) received a call from the Police at 9:30 pm

Council colleagues and the Duty Director were called out at 10 pm and worked through the night till 4 am making sure residents were looked after in a temporary rest centre with our partner organisation the Royal British Legion

More council colleagues were called out to provide emergency transport and catering services to support our efforts at the rest centre. Colleagues came in late Wednesday night and the early hours of Thursday morning to arrange temporary hotel accommodation for displaced residents and to transport them to the hotels

The council deployed a LALO (Local Authority Liaison Officer) to the site of the incident to assist residents and liaise with the emergency services at their Silver Meetings

### **Thu 8<sup>th</sup> May**

The BECC (Borough Emergency Command Centre) was opened in the Boardroom. This is the LESLP (London Emergency Services Liaison Panel) approved set up for dealing with a major incident and includes specific statutory procedures for the co-ordination of the response

The council's emergency response consisted of five distinct teams:

Incident Management – Duty Director, EPO, and EROs in the BECC, and LALO on site

Welfare – housing, adult social care and children's services

Operations – building structures, highways and access

Logistics – transport and catering

Communications – both internal and external

Contact was made with the PCT to arrange for a duty doctor to attend the rest centre and provide any medication that may have been left behind following the evacuation such as insulin for diabetics

66 residents were evacuated. The council sent housing officers to the hotels and site to assist displaced residents and book them further hotel accommodation and meals

Emergency money packages were arranged to give to displaced residents to assist with essential purchases of food and clothing

A twenty-four helpline was set up at the One Stop Shop and staffed by volunteers through the day and night to help residents

The Police cordon initially covered a wide area including Local Road, Second Road and Third Road. This meant that residents and businesses were unable to access their properties or possessions due to the forensic search of the blast area

Council structural engineers attended the site to check properties and assist the London Fire Brigade and Police to access them safely. They also assisted residents retrieve some of their personal possessions

Displaced residents were visited by the council's customer services director and a Police inspector to update them on a regular basis. Letters were delivered to residents on a regular basis to keep them informed of the situation

The council provided portable flood lights to provide security and assist the police with their fingertip forensic search of the blast area

### **Fri 9<sup>th</sup> May**

A LALO was sent to liaise with businesses, to keep them appraised of the situation and to arrange for some temporary access to facilitate their business needs

The LALO accompanied by a Police Inspector spoke to business people on a regular basis to see if the Police cordon could be adjusted to assist businesses to trade. The LALO also gave advice on insurance issues

The council arranged for a representative from the Association of British Insurers to visit and speak to business people and offer advice

At the Police Gold Meeting the Duty Director pressed for access to Local Road by midday on Saturday

Schools were alerted that children from the area may be in shock

### **Sat 10<sup>th</sup> May**

The 24 hour helpline was staffed throughout the weekend to assist displaced residents

38 homes were returned to residents on Sat by 1930 hrs, a great achievement, with the Police cordon being significantly reduced, and residents being transported from their hotels by council staff

The council worked with the London Fire Brigade to have fire fighters on hand to check people's gas was safe and assist them to reoccupy their properties

The EDT (Emergency Duty Team) for housing and social services were on duty 24/7 throughout the weekend to assist residents

The council assisted residents by removing loose and damaged tiles from their roofs

### **Sun 11<sup>th</sup> May**

The Police cordon was further reduced and Third Road was returned with 12 homes returned to residents on Sun

The council also tried to facilitate other means of access for businesses by negotiating with the Police for limited access for larger vehicles through half of Local Road

Ongoing social care for children and adults by Children's Services and Adults & Housing Departments

Cordon collapsed to vicinity of properties



**Mon 12<sup>th</sup> May**

A special refuse collection was arranged to empty all the bins. Daily refuse collection was arranged to assist residents with their clear up

Meeting arranged for residents who still remained within the cordon at the civic centre so they could meet the Leader of the Council and the Police Borough Commander

A team of dedicated officers have been set up to look after the longer term housing, social services and children's needs

Council workers have been clearing away rubble and debris and the Police have reduced their cordon and allowed the council access to most of the site

**Tue 13<sup>th</sup> May**

The council has been working with police to arrange greater access to Local Road so that residents and businesses can start to return to a degree of normality

The council was in contact with Royal Mail to assist in the resumption of postal deliveries to residents and businesses

Council workers have been cleaning the street

**Wed 14<sup>th</sup> May**

The council has offered free boarding up of any houses that have not yet taken up the council's offer

A total of 150 council officers have been involved in the emergency response to this incident

**Thu 15<sup>th</sup> May**

The BECC (Borough Emergency Command Centre) was closed as the emergency response phase came to an end and we moved into the recovery phase

Long term housing, social services and highways issues were handed over to individual departments

Officers remained on standby during the weekend in case they were required to reinstate the BECC

(Intentionally blank)

## **Appendix 2: Feedback reports from individual departments**

### **One Stop Shop**

(1) Introductory paragraph on what your department does

The One Stop Shop went live in 2006 in order to centralise customer contact, introduce new systems to manage all interactions with customers and to both transition and up skill existing staff to provide re-engineered services.

One Stop Shop currently handles 80,000 customer contacts each month.

(2) Summary of the actions your department took during the emergency response to the incident

Set up and man the emergency hotline

To feed information from residents into the Gold Command Team

To relay information from the Gold Command Team to the residents calling the emergency hotline

(3) Positive highlights of things that went well

Staff response to assist – late night and weekend working

(4) Issues that need to be addressed/ could have been done better

See recommendations below

(5) Any recommendations to improve our service

#### Telephony

Emergency telephone number to be reserved for future unplanned events (in place)

Investigate the routing of the telephone line through IPCC to ensure availability of:

- voicemail
- suite of MI
- call queuing facility

#### Operational

Emergency line to be based in the 'Control Room' to ensure continuous flow of information

An FAQ sheet to be in place to handle the most common questions

A pack of correspondence sent to residents available for reference

A reference point of useful contact numbers to be collated including:

- insurance companies
- key internal staff
- hotels/accommodation where residents are based

A template to capture resident details and to update information. Use of SAP to be investigated.

## **Adults & Housing Directorate**

Overall, I think our response was a success. The areas we should reflect on are:

- \* ensuring staff have taken responsibility to hold the relevant contact lists at the onset of an emergency
- \* I think it felt like there were two cultures in the incident room or even an inner circle and outer group.
- \* It felt like a number of people were dealing with accommodation rather than going through agreed procedures. (or maybe procedures weren't agreed).
- \* We had conflict on how we handled affected families either give them everything they want or support them to look after themselves where appropriate.
- \* I think we had moments when behaviour between colleagues lacked respect.
- \* Resident complaints were handled very differently to normal business. There seemed to be an assumption that someone had made a mistake rather than an attempt to figure out what had happened.
- \* Member involvement was too operational in managing the incident.
- \* I'm not clear we had a proper silver and gold distinction and we did not give the Duty Director as much rest as we should have.

## **Adult Services**

1. Adult Services provides Social Care assessment and support services to vulnerable adults in combination with partner agencies in the Voluntary Sector and the NHS. It specifically works with persons and their carers who suffer from a Learning Disability, Physical Disability, problems of Old Age, people suffering from Mental Ill Health are assisted through services provided by our colleagues in the Local Mental Health NHS Trust.

2. Senior Officers in the Department were contacted early in the morning of the day of the incident and started planning actions needed later that morning particularly in respect of making alternative arrangements for the 130+ clients with a Learning Disability who attend the Local Day Centre on a daily basis. Senior Officers discussed the matter early in the morning and based themselves at the Civic Centre from 07.30 that morning to make the necessary arrangements with the day centre working with the staff to contact carers of clients who normally attend the centre to make them aware of the situation and offer alternative forms of care. This meant staff having to be redeployed at residential care settings and working with individuals in the community. Staff also checked the database to establish who was known to the Department in the effected area. A member of the Senior Management Team represented Adult Care Management at the Silver meetings. A team was established with representatives from all client group areas to be able to respond to identified need from the effected area and the re-located residents. Assistance was provided to vulnerable residents in their relocation and obtaining possessions from their property. Assistance was also provided subsequently in the

return of residents to their property. Contact was made with the Psychology Team at Local Hospital. In one case the link was established for assistance for one resident of the area. A number of cases were discussed between the Psychology Team and one of the Senior Officers.

3. It provided a good opportunity for different Departments of the Council to work together with a clear objective to minimize negative impact on people affected. It was in particular the close working between Housing/ Adult Social Care and Children's Services staff that was a very positive experience.

4. There was a definite 'inner' and 'outer' group at the silver meetings. Insiders who did use a language of their own and as a non-member of this inner group I had a very uncomfortable feeling at times. For the 'inner' group the provision of the rest of the Council's services appeared to be irrelevant. While I have some understanding for this it is very different for those services that had to continue providing uninterrupted services for the rest of the borough residents. There has been a lot of turn over of staff and it is necessary to re-establish and re-evaluate who needs to be members of the emergency/ disaster team to ensure that all relevant Council services are represented. We need to establish what assistance is appropriate and should be provided by this Council in what circumstances. We are still under pressure of people who were given unrealistic expectations about what the Council would/ could provide for them. Inappropriate judgements were made by officers and communicated in an unacceptable manner.

5. Establish telephone tree for responsible officers to be contacted.

Set clear standards for financial assistance.

Communication skills need to be addressed within the team that needs to operate with respect for each other and services represented.

Role of elected members in these events needs to be considered.

## **Catering Services**

(1)

The team of fifty – who are based in Day Centres, Schools, Civic Centre, Central Distribution Unit & Meals on Wheels

During the week, the department is responsible for supplying 23 schools with chilled packed lunches and three primary schools with a hot lunch service. They provide welfare catering to all of the Day and Resource Centres, and are also on call for any emergencies within the borough.

Local homebound residents are taken care of through the catering team's Meals on Wheels service, which operates 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

*The Special Needs Transport & Catering Management team operate a call-out rota for emergencies. Both these areas are fully able to provide transport vehicles & catering at the same time through this call-out system.*

(2)

The on call manager arranged for transport & catering staff to respond to the emergency. Catering & Transport staff normally respond to any emergency that involved the evacuation of residents in the borough that will also require feeding. We initially provide refreshments to residents & emergency staff if required. Sandwiches & snacks are also provided at this stage, later we will provide meals etc. The vehicles are provided to move residents from homes to the rest centres or to hotels etc.

(3)  
Catering & Transport staff responded well and were on site either at the Civic Staff Restaurant or Local Road by 11pm & then transported all the refreshment to Local Road, they all worked through to 3am.

(4)  
Better training for officers performing the Duty Manager's role, better forms of communication during events, possible radio system to be used on a closed channel.

(5)  
Improved controls on the additional resource's being deployed.

## **Children's Services**

Overall, from a Children's Services point of view, the positive highlights were as follows;

1. Positive opportunity to work closely with Housing and Adult Care.
2. Excellent electronic access to data about children and families in the Local Road area - good to have tested our electronic data bases (HOST/Fwi & EMS) in an emergency planning situation and this proved invaluable.
3. Availability and willingness of Children's social care workforce to assist with additional tasks when required.
4. Positive feedback from families that sought support (accommodation, financial and social care).
5. Positive acknowledgement and support provided by Children's Services partners, namely the Health PCT and local schools.
6. Positive input from EDT SW's who assisted with out of hours housing needs issues and the distribution of cash packets.

In terms of issues to be addressed;

### **1. Responsible Staff:**

We probably need to review the Emergency Response Officer (ERO) list and refresh individuals and their managers about their roles and responsibilities during an emergency planning situation.

### **2. Silver Group:**

Senior managerial leads for each key service area need to be agreed and notified as a matter of course in any emergency planning situation. I was only invited to the first Silver Group by chance and my arrival in the meeting was met with a very direct question about who I was rather than what services I had come to offer/ represent. It was difficult to feel part of the group at times although there a meaningful and purposeful relationship was struck up outside of the group with Housing and Adult Care. The structure and process of the group could have been tighter and the management of key messages between the Board Room and the site were not always well co-ordinated. The need to track residents and gather intelligence about their needs and circumstances was not acknowledged at the outset as a central need and information coming via Access Harrow was not assimilated quickly enough into the spreadsheet that Housing were compiling/ up-dating.

### **3. Homelessness Needs:**

There needs to be one agreed system and process for co-ordinating, assessing and meeting all

homelessness needs arising from emergency planning type situations. Requests need to go via the Housing Department, or via the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) if the emergency planning situation occurs out of hours. This is the local custom and practice and a departure from this way of working should only happen if agreed by the respective senior managers for Housing and EDT, in consultation with others, when justified as appropriate and/ or necessary.

There was unnecessary confusion, duplication and poor communication with residents as a result of some officers and members making promises, agreeing bookings and giving undertakings about housing needs without referring to the Housing Department first.

#### 4. Type of Temporary Accommodation:

As is the standard EDT procedure, all homelessness needs are met using the agreed preferred providers list of local B&B provision. In the heat of the crisis when the need to find alternative accommodation was a priority this list of preferred providers was used by EDT and the on-call Housing Manager.

During the course of the emergency planning situation a very strong criticism emerged about the type of accommodation used. There was a view that this type of accommodation was not of sufficient standard for displaced residents, although this is the standard of accommodation routinely used for all other people that are homeless. The critical manner in which this emerging view was expressed was unhelpful in that it showed a lack of respect and understanding for the good work that was being undertaken. This view also exposed the Council as having double standards towards those in need of our help and support. The Stanley Road displaced residents were apparently more deserving and therefore should be offered more expensive accommodation than would ordinarily be the case.

If this is the case for future emergency planning situations a clear policy decision needs to be made so that officers know what type of accommodation to offer. This accommodation needs to be included in an alternative list of preferred providers for use in emergency planning situations of this nature.

#### 5. Social Care & Housing Support:

The underlying philosophy of meeting social care and housing needs is to work in partnership with users to meet our statutory obligations and build capacity to help users help themselves in the longer term. There were some confusing messages whereby Housing was expected to approach residents to change arrangements that they had already made. In some cases residents had already made other appropriate arrangements, via their own insurance companies and/ or with the support of friends and family, which the Housing Department were then asked to change. These messages of support were confusing for officers and residents. There needs to be a clearer statement about what the Council's responsibilities are going to be in an emergency planning situation if the standard of support is expected to be greater than that which we would ordinarily provide.

#### 6. Complaints:

Reports that a resident was unhappy or complaining was often accepted as evidence that an officer had failed to behave appropriately and had done something wrong. This created an unhelpful blame culture. We must embrace the approach of analysing to learn rather than investigating to blame.

There were a couple of families that were critical about the support provided. On some occasions the way that they voiced their dissatisfaction was challenging and difficult to deal with. I think we need to appreciate that this type and level of challenge is often symptomatic of the distress and trauma felt. In a future emergency planning situation this type of reaction may

need to be acknowledged and better understood in order to identify those residents that may need a different kind of intervention.

#### 7. Cash Packets:

It would be helpful to agree some standard daily rates for adults and children, with and without meals, so that these can be offered consistently in the future.

### **Communications Team**

#### (1) Introductory paragraph on what your department does

The communications department is the first port of call for external media enquiries. The team comprises of media, marketing and internal marketing officers who devise media opportunities, put together releases for papers, TV and radio, and market the authority both externally to our own staff. It is led by a head of communications.

#### (2) Summary of the actions your department took during the emergency response to the incident

A media officer went to Local Road shortly after midnight and dealt with reporters present. Throughout the next seven days, the communications office updated TV, radio and newspapers on a running basis, set up briefings for the weekly newspapers, helped with direct communications to residents and updated our website. Councillors and the council's own staff were also regularly updated.

#### (3) Positive highlights of things that went well

Throughout the weekend of 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May BBC and ITV, both on TV and online, reported Harrow's proactive role in housing those made temporarily homeless. National and regional newspapers also reflected the positive side of the council's work. That message was underlined by radio interviews on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May on BBC London and LBC set up by the communications office. Extracts of a three-page list of positive actions taken by the Council were used in the Local Observer on May 15.

#### (4) Issues that need to be addressed/ could have been done better

Journalists doorstepped the homeless at hotels in the borough and also made persistent attempts to unearth backgrounder detail about the victim. On reflection, we should have offered to broker conversations between those made homeless and the media at an early stage - that way, anyone who wanted to talk to the press could have done so quickly while we would indicate to the others that doorstepping would be fruitless and counter-productive. We should also have anticipated earlier that interest in the victim would lead to journalists cold-calling to find more information.

#### (5) Any recommendations to improve our service

There is currently no way to update our website externally. This is technically possible but needs senior managerial approval to make it happen. The other question is who updates the website. Ownership of the website has been devolved across the building but in practice this has created a confusing picture. I would suggest that a number of members of the silver group are trained in uploading simple documents to our website. While the comms department can advise on the tone of those messages, it is more important that key people from any department



are able to upload basic information, from home if necessary.

It would also be helpful if a senior member of the comms team could be present at Gold meetings. Pressure from media outlets becomes constant when major stories are unfolding, and the sooner the Council is able to update the media, the more it will be able to be in control of the message.

## **Community & Environment Directorate**

### Lessons learnt – Initial Summary

#### Context

The Police, Council and Fire Brigade senior management, are content that the response to the incident - in which one person died, two people were quite seriously injured, three houses were totally destroyed, two other houses seriously damaged and many other properties within 150 metre radius were damaged to varying degrees - was good, resulting in a successful outcome, including release of the Police cordon in double-quick time.

During any incident the demand for information is insatiable, in particular from:-

The many media organisations and related individuals;  
Residents and relatives of those directly involved;  
Residents living within the cordon;  
Local residents in the same and adjoining streets;  
Businesses directly affected by the incident and/or the cordon;  
Council leadership – the Administration and Opposition groups;  
Local MP(s);  
GLA member;  
Ward Councillors;  
Community faith and resident groups;  
The wider community.

Information takes time to capture, verify, consolidate and package for appropriate dissemination.

### Lessons learnt – Elected Member involvement

The role of Elected Members during any “Critical or Major Incident” needs to be clearly defined, in particular for :-

The Council Leader and Deputy,  
Relevant Portfolio Holder;  
Ward Councillors.

The Council Leader and Cabinet Members should receive “Emergency Planning” training – this should be mandatory.

All Ward Councillors should be briefed on the Emergency Plan, the approach to incident response and the role of Ward Councillors during any incident.

Two-way communications with, and the engagement and deployment of Elected Members during any incident needs to be recognised as a benefit and including as a key element of the Emergency Response Plan.

Elected Members, however, must understand and accept the critical importance of “command and control” in any incident situation, in particular during the initial response phase, which can last a few days, and must participate in a proactive and positive way, accepting that “business as usual conventions” will often be overridden.

There is a clear expectation, on the part of residents affected by an incident, that their Councillors will act as advocates in respect of issues which may be relevant only to specific individuals or households. Managing resident expectation through each phase of the incident response must be undertaken proactively by the Councillor receiving requests.

The sovereignty of the Police cordons, inner and outer, must be respected by Councillors, who must also act proactively and positively with residents to support the need and purpose of the cordons.

The incident management arrangements, both within the Council and within the Gold and Silver joint incident command and control arrangements, must provide a platform for effective two-way communications with Elected Members.

The Gold Command Group is comprised of senior management of the responding agencies and Elected Members and other Community representatives must accept that they do not have a role at this Forum. There needs to be a clear protocol agreed between the Police, Council and Fire Brigade regarding the operation and scope of the Gold Group.

Media messages are a critical element of the “reassurance work stream”. The dissemination of information to the media, during any incident situation, must, therefore, be most carefully managed and co-ordinated through the Gold and Silver command structure.

There needs to be a clear format and process to enable Elected Members to capture information from residents and businesses, and to feed this into the incident management.

Officers deployed in response to any incident work on a shift rota. The same approach needs to be established for Elected Members, in particular the Leader and Deputy.

Some residents will want to maintain some contact with Council some time after the incident; it is likely that the advocacy role of Elected Members will be even more important at this stage. Preparing Members to deal with these contacts needs to be taken forward.

## **Emergency Planning Team**

### Lessons learnt – Incident Management and Response

- A permanent Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC) to be established, rather than a temporary BECC set up the next day in the Boardroom.
- A review of Social Services’ phone numbers/ duty managers/ duty officers in the Contact Directory.
- Access to Electoral Register, Council Tax, and Housing Benefit records out of hours.

- The need for Out Of Hours (OOH) contacts/ duty personnel in all departments, e.g. IT Service, Finance. With on-call payments for duty personnel.
- Improve communications with local Primary Care Trust (PCT). NHS procedure of initial communication from London Ambulance Service (LAS), to NHS London, then to PCT is too slow.
- Separate briefing for lead Members following Gold Meetings for operational officers.
- Policy guidelines for the issue of cash packets, food, drinks, clothes, toiletries for displaced residents.
- Review of standard homelessness policy compared to homelessness following a major incident.
- Improvement required regarding contact with the Civic Centre. One Stop Shop moved from 9 am – 5 pm, to 24-hour hotline during the response period to the incident.
- Need more volunteer Emergency Response Officers (ERO). Currently there is a rota of 12 officers, who have full-time jobs within the Council. Increase this number to 30 x EROs. We were unable to fully staff the BECC. By Day 3 of the incident we were short of staff.
- The need for payment for On-Call and Duty personnel. The EROs and departmental duty officers should be properly paid for being on call in line with other Councils. At present there is a heavy reliance on goodwill.
- Equipment for Local Authority Liaison Officers (LALO). LALOs were deployed at Local Road to deal with residents and businesses. They require better equipment – mobile phones, laptops, Hi-Vis vests with a “LALO” logo to identify themselves to the Police and public.
- Review of log keeping arrangements. Current IT set up did not work. Created a backlog due to lack of EROs and admin staff in the BECC
- Review of IT for major incidents. Require a central drive/ secure intranet/ secure website for all ERO documents to facilitate information sharing and shift handovers.
- Emergency laptops to be regularly checked by IT Service and updated as necessary.
- Improve communication from Gold Meeting to Silver and Bronze Commanders on the ground, e.g. movement of Police Cordon, control of limited access for residents and businesses.
- Recognition of the importance of the Duty Director Rota.

## **Engineering Services**

(1)

Engineering Services manage and maintain the public realm including Roads, Footways,

lighting, drainage, Structures and watercourses.

As assets of the Council and valued at over 750 million, management is a complex task and some 12 - 14 million pounds a year is invested in renewal and maintenance.

Part of our role is ensuring public safety. We have a detailed and well documented emergency service plan with engineers on call 24 / 7 for any incident of any size. This is part of the corporate emergency plan and we are part of a London wide consortium in dealing with the delegation under the Highways act. The consortium makes use of a wide range of services under a supply chain agreement with our partner organisations.

(2)

On the night of the incident, a call was made to the duty engineer, who attended the site with 10 minutes. An assessment was made of the situation, and our partners were instructed to attend site with personnel and equipment urgently.

Council Engineers remained on site throughout the incident and continued to orchestrate operations and will keep running the operation until final clearance later this week.

(3)

Engineering process worked well

Service resourced to completion

Consortium partnership worked very well

Good site comms with emergency services / stat undertakers / Health and Safety.

Organisation of site operations

rate of return of residents

First contact with insurers, loss adjusters and their engineers

speed of opening Local Road and Second Road

(4)

Confusing chain of communications

Clarity of instructions

briefing LALOs and EROs

Feed back from Gold meetings and decisions made at Gold meetings

one person on site needs to be in charge - supported by others

Mess facilities - had to rely on others for simple things such as water etc.

PPE required for all who visited site

(5)

Site Person in charge needs full control (incident director) - supported by others

dedicated project team

Site office for large scale incidents

LALO and ERO training - i.e. health and safety course / site awareness /etc

Council attendance log

## **Housing Department**

There were very many good points in responding to the recent emergency.  
I will not list those.

The incident at Local Road is much more typical than Alpha Road fire on 15th February 2008.

## People

There needs to be a capacity building approach to emergency planning.

- get the people away from the centre of the incident, provide toilets and hot drinks and warmth,
- leave the centre of the event to Police, Fire Brigade utilities and LA etc.
- provide respite with telephones and facilities for people to solve their own problems,
- Make sure record keeping is fast and accurate (we are still trying to find out who stayed in which hotel and agree the bills) There were some free loaders.
- housing options staff should be part of an emergency planning team and should be ready to mobilise, forms for capturing contact details and requirements, key fobs, telephones with long life etc
- provide support including cash in accordance with needs of people,
- agree communication lines with people directly affected.

## Data

- it took time and effort to collate data about the area and who might be living, working or operating a business from the area ,
- data needs to be available and up dated at regular intervals,

## Communication

- need to improve on the site communication between response organisations to avoid duplication,
- need to avoid telling the local papers we are handing out cash,
- need more on site than in the office,
- need to agree roles with response organisations,
- do not hold public meetings they will feed on the negative and not the positive
- gold meetings to be limited to top dogs only,
- need to give attention to translation requirements

Note the effect on continuing to provide normal services whilst attention is given to the emergency. Will need to prioritise and make clear effect on normal service.

## Public Realm Services

### General

- Out of hours management attendance on the night of the explosion
- Head of Service and Service Manager liaison both in work hours and out of hours
- Daily contact between operational management and MIRA officers

### Street Cleansing

- Staff deployed from the first day of the incident
- Initial focus on surrounding roads to clear dust and broken glass – this included out of hours work with staff and mechanics on 10 May 2008
- As the police cordon was moved, operational management liaised with the site supervisor and conducted a deep clean of pavements, carriageways and pathways to each of the houses

- Fly tips from the private alleyway at the bottom of Local Road were removed enable residents to gain access to the road
- Staff and management had a presence everyday until the clear up was completed

#### Waste Management

- Refuse attended site and emptied all household bins on site
- Trade Refuse was checked to ensure bins were not overflowing
- All bins were assessed to ensure that there were no potential H&S issues

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