

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**31 MARCH 2009**

Chairman: * Councillor Mark Versallion

Councillors:	* John Cowan (1)	* Christopher Noyce
	* B E Gate	* Phillip O'Dell
	* Thaya Idaikkadar (3)	* Mrs Rekha Shah
	* Ashok Kulkarni	* Dinesh Solanki
	* Janet Mote	* Yogesh Teli

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

[Note: Councillors Paul Osborn, Stanley Sheinwald and Jeremy Zeid also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 119 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES****113. Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Anthony Seymour
Councillor Nana Asante

Reserve Member

Councillor John Cowan
Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

114. Declarations of Interest:

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 9 – Harrow PCT Chlamydia and Immunisations Update

Councillor B E Gate declared a personal interest in that his wife worked in a General Practice and his daughter occasionally worked in another. He would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.

Councillor Janet Mote declared a personal interest in that her daughter was a paediatric nurse. She would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.

Councillor Mark Versallion declared a personal interest in that he was a non-executive Director of the North West London NHS Hospitals Trust. He would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.

Councillor Stanley Sheinwald declared a personal interest in that he was the Chairman of the Carers' Partnership Group and an out-patient of a hospital that served Harrow. He would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.

115. Minutes:

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

116. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:

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

117. References from Council and Other Committees/Panels:

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

118. **Chairman's Report:**

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, this item was admitted late to the agenda in order that the Sub-Committee could agree any actions arising for implementation. The report had not been available at the time the agenda was dispatched and circulated as it was being consulted on.

The Chairman introduced the report, which set out issues considered by him since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee. The Vice-Chairman commented that if Members felt there were certain areas in need of scrutiny then these could be added to the agenda. A Member requested that the results of the customer satisfaction survey from the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum be analysed, particularly as the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) would be informed by how residents perceived the Council's services. The Chairman replied that the issues were relevant, and formed part of the ongoing assessments carried out by the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be endorsed;

(2) the following issues be investigated by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting scheduled to be held on 20 July 2009:

- 6 Month Update on Obesity Review;
- 3 Month Update on the Right to Manage;
- Decent Homes;
- Percentage of urgent repairs to Council Housing completed within government time limits;

(3) the Chairman submit a summary of Harrow-wide performance issues, as identified through the Chairman's meetings and the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee, to the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

119. **Harrow PCT Chlamydia and Immunisations Update:**

The Head of Performance and Information, Harrow Primary Care Trust (PCT), introduced the report which provided an update on chlamydia screening, immunisations, and the Accident and Emergency 4-Hour waiting times targets.

Regarding chlamydia screening, it was noted that:

- the PCT were some way off achieving the targets set. It had been slow to commission screenings at the beginning of the project and as a result the Public Health Team had been increased. A different package had since been rolled out, with a reported increase in the uptake;
- screenings undertaken at the Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinics were not included in the national target assessment. Approximately 2,000 screenings had not been included in the figures;
- the PCT expected to finish the current year (2008/2009) with 10% of the population of Harrow, between the ages of 15 and 24, having been screened, with an increase to 25% the following year (2009/10). The PCT were confident of achieving its targets;
- the PCT would be working with the laboratories to try and include the screenings undertaken by the GUM clinics in future so as to provide an accurate and true representation of the number of tests carried out.

Regarding immunisations, it was noted that:

- the PCT had been set target levels by the Department of Health for the proportion of children that should be immunised against a series of illnesses by a particular age. The PCT was measured against both the target and the information held by the Child Health System. The analysis was overseen by the North West London Hospitals NHS Trust;
- the review of the figures produced by the Child Health System showed that the numbers of immunised children were lower than expected when compared to the PCT system which recorded the number of immunisations undertaken in

each GP practice. Therefore the performance issue was predominately a data issue;

- since the review, the Child Health Service and GP practices had seen a considerable improvement in the figures. The results would be reported in full at the end of May 2009;
- the PCT had worked with GPs and the Child Health Service to validate the lists held on the Child Health System. The validation had increased the reported immunisation rates to above the target levels;
- as a side issue, work had been carried out on the number of Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccinations, particularly after the media reported claims of dangers associated with the vaccination. These claims had since been disproved by the scientific community;
- a significant proportion of the under-18 population were not immunised against MMR. A catch-up programme was being undertaken.

Regarding the Accident and Emergency 4-hour waiting time target, it was noted that:

- the 4-hour waiting time target was missed for the year 2008/2009 by 0.5%;
- the 2008/09 winter had been particularly unpleasant, and had led to an increase in the numbers of patients, which included a proportion of NHS staff. Work had been carried out by the PCT to make more staff available to cover such periods;
- the PCT representative stated that it had taken some time to get over the associated effects of the winter, however, the waiting time target had been met by mid-February;
- an urgent care centre had been opened at Northwick Park Hospital to treat minor injuries and relieve some of the burden from A&E;
- the PCT was pleased with its progress, but not complacent.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Performance and Information at the PCT confirmed that:

- there had been an incident of chlamydia screening letters being sent to young children. This had occurred due to an administrative error. In order to prevent such mistakes happening in the future a more robust checking procedure had been put in place. Although a regrettable mistake, the incident had led to an increase in the number of queries regarding chlamydia screening from the public;
- there was a need to better engage with the Asian population of Harrow about chlamydia screenings. Other areas of London with diverse communities had seen an increase in the number of screenings and much could be learnt from their practices;
- the number of positive screenings of chlamydia in the borough placed Harrow in the lower percentile;
- the number of chlamydia screenings was a nationally set target. Some groups felt that such practices were not relevant to their communities. The PCT did not see this as a reason to preclude them from the screenings;
- a target for the number of screenings had been given to the laboratories by the PCT. The low uptake at the start of the year was due in part to the lack of input from clinics on how to engage with the community better. Since Andrew Howe, Joint Director of Public Health, had started working jointly with the PCT and the Council there had been an increase in the number of screenings;
- the PCT had weekly discussions on the subject of Chlamydia screenings. It was thought that as targets were met the issue would be less important on the PCT's agenda;
- striving to meeting Accident and Emergency waiting time targets would not lead to a reduction in levels of clinical quality;

- a 'PCT Navigator' would be present in the Accident and Emergency department to help guide patients to the appropriate service. This would include directing them to the urgent care centre if required;
- the waiting time target accounted for the time from initial assessment to either discharge or admission;
- there was no specific target for how long a patient should wait to be met by a member of staff upon arrival. The first member of staff seen would be a trained health professional;
- the performance figures for waiting times took into account the recent fire at Northwick Park Hospital;
- chlamydia screening was the only target given to the PCT by the Department of Health regarding sexual health screenings.

The Vice-Chairman expressed his appreciation of the joint work being carried out by the education and health professionals in keeping the children of the borough healthy.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

120. **Officers' Update Report on Performance in Gaining National Healthy Schools Status:**

An officer introduced a report of the Director of Children's Services, which provided an update on the work carried out in gaining National Healthy School Status since the previous 'by exception' update in October 2008. Gaining the National Healthy Schools Status was not a statutory requirement on schools or the local authority, but was seen as an example of good practice, and was in line with the 'be healthy' agenda. Officers engaged in persuading schools to apply for the Status acknowledged that schools currently had other support-intensive and time-consuming priorities. As such, officers felt that the impetus for gaining the status often slipped down the schools' list of priorities.

An officer reported that schools had been offered supply cover to attend the support sessions provided in the spring term, with further funding for 'well being' provided on successful completion of the audit. The supply cover would allow the Healthy Schools coordinator time to complete the audit. The Local Authority also had a consultant on hand, funded by the national programme, to offer support to schools in Harrow.

In response to questions, officers confirmed that:

- there could be some slippage in the number of schools expected to gain the Status. Taking this into account, the final figure would be 93% of Harrow schools gaining the Status. This was in excess of the national target of 75%;
- the evidence required for the Healthy Schools Status would help with the 'Be Healthy' element of Ofsted inspections, regardless of whether the Status had been awarded or not. It was hoped that the inclusion of this evidence would support some schools in moving towards an "outstanding" judgement by OFSTED;
- gaining Healthy Schools Status required meeting 41 criteria points across four themes: Personal, Social and Health and Economic Education; Healthy Eating; Physical Activity; and Emotional Health and Wellbeing;
- to gain the Status, a summary of evidence had to be submitted online. This information was examined by a group of assessors and followed by a validation visit to the school. In addition, quality assurance members talked to adults and children at the school;
- the length of time taken to gain the Status varied from school to school, with some taking up to three or four terms;
- some schools found it difficult to find the time to capture the evidence and complete the audit. It was a process that should be ongoing, but in reality was often hard to achieve. The evidence required for the Status was something that could be used for the Ofsted self-evaluation;
- schools that had amalgamated and had hitherto gained the Status would have to re-submit their evidence and face assessment before being awarded the status again;

- issues of obesity and the promotion of healthy diets were being captured by the healthy eating and physical activity themes programmes;
- gaining Healthy Schools Status did not detract from time spent teaching, as it required evidence of effective learning. Schools had reported that gaining the Status was a positive experience and helpful as it centred around issues of well-being.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the performance information on gaining Healthy School Status, where possible, be made available monthly to permit the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman to monitor the matter closely.

121. **Council Improvement Programme and Comprehensive Performance Assessment:**

The Assistant Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services presented a report, which set out the progress against the Council Improvement Programme (CIP) 2008-2011 and provided an update on the outcomes of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services commented that he, and the Assistant Chief Executive, had asked to present their report to the Committee rather than be asked to appear on a 'by exception' basis. The Scrutiny Challenge Panel involved with the CIP had requested that there be a progress report on the CIP be brought to Scrutiny.

During the presentation on the CIP, it was noted that:

- external judgements, such as the IDeA Peer Review, the March 2007 Corporate Assessment, the May 2008 Access to Services Inspection and the December 2007 Use of Resources had all contributed to the list of challenges faced by Harrow Council, and provide assessment a context for improvement;
- the Improvement Programme mapped out the Chief Executive's 'Nine Step Plan'. The Plan aimed to understand the links between focus, accountability, sequencing and synergy required for success. The Programme was monitored monthly by the Chief Executive and project sponsors in order to assess its progress against plotted milestones, the challenges faced, and how these challenges could be resolved;
- no high-performing organisation in any sector could succeed without the areas covered in the 'Nine Step Plan', and as such it formed an excellent foundation for success;
- Capital Ambition had provided in excess of £500,000 funding for the Programme and its progress was assessed at quarterly meetings. It was felt that Capital Ambition viewed Harrow Council as an excellent target for investment, and that the Council's standing had improved as it had met the required targets;
- clear methods of communication had been employed across the Council, including the staff newsletter, and the Chief Executive's Newsletters and staff forums;
- as of March 2009 no projects were 'red' The majority of projects were 'green', with the remainder 'amber' – which identified the challenges, but that the projects were still expected to be delivered;
- many projects had been completed successfully, including reducing sickness absence, maximising income to the Council and establishing a Culture Change Programme;
- regarding the Council's 'vision and priorities', progress had been made with a refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy launch, a Community Consultation Strategy which had been launched in October 2008, an elected Member Development Programme launch, and a revised and simplified set of Corporate Priorities giving a clear view of what was achievable;

- there had been detailed work on financial management across the Council rather than emphasis being placed on specific problem areas. The Efficiency and Improvement Board had been established to manage the programme effectively;
- the Financial Effectiveness Review and subsequent action plan had been an important piece of work. Financial monitoring was carried out on a monthly basis, and refresher training had been offered to budget holders and management teams. The measures had resulted in successful outcomes in both the Use of Resources and Value for Money, as the ratings had gone up from a two to three;
- a procurement team had been put in place. In the New Year there would be a full service review of the team;
- a revised Performance Management Framework had been implemented to assess 'people performance', project delivery, performance indicators, customers' needs, and associated risks;
- there had been a significant improvement in Individual Performance, Appraisal and Development (IPAD) completion, which was presently standing at 87% of the workforce;
- with regard to first impressions, progress had been made in response to the Access to Services inspection. A new scanning and workflow system had been introduced in the Revenue and Benefits department to ensure that correspondence was directed to the appropriate member of staff. The One Stop Shop had seen a reduction in congestion, with more space created and an improved reception area;
- Planning and Building Control Services would be integrated into the One Stop Shop;
- the post of a Corporate Complaints Officer had been created to combat the large number of complaints that were sent to the Ombudsman;
- the 'Mystery Shopper' project had provided detailed responses about which areas needed improvement;
- a set of customer care standards had been drawn up against which staff performance could be measured;
- there had been improved customer access, with an increase in the use of web forms from 200 in July 2006 to 700-900 per month in 2009;
- with regard to communications, progress had been made with the introduction of the staff newsletter, manager and staff forums, a refreshed Harrow People Magazine, external marketing campaigns, the launch of the Reputation Tracker, and the production of a combined A-Z Council Tax Guide sent to all residents and a related version to all businesses;
- the website had seen many developments. Residents could view any planning applications within a quarter of a mile of their homes by simply entering their postcode;
- the Local Government Association (LGA) Reputation Criteria rated Harrow with 8 Gold, 3 Silver and 1 Bronze stars. At the start of the CIP the Council had been rated as having only a few Gold measures;
- with regard to work life balance, progress had been made with the launch of a revised staff benefits programme, an action plan responding to the staff survey, and the launch of a new staff well-being programme which had been developed with both the Trade Unions and the Directorates;
- sickness absence had improved to 8.83 (2008/09 Q3), compared to 10.34 (2006/07) and 8.97 (2007/2008). Compared to the London-wide figure, Harrow was performing well;
- every percentage point gained back regarding sickness absence equated to more services for the community;

- the CREATE values had been launched and rolled out within each Directorate as well as the first CREATE awards ceremony held in December 2008;
- with regard to investment in people, a strategic analysis was under way of the Learning and Development spend. The Management Development Programme was 80% complete, with the fourth module expected to be delivered in July 2009. The 360 degree feedback for the Corporate Leadership Group, followed by 1:1 coaching sessions, had been completed;
- there had been a reduction in staff turnover from 14.14% to 8.45%;
- an organisational review had been undertaken. The new structure was in place with all appointments made to Chief Officer posts. The review had led to a 10% saving, no compulsory redundancies and over 50 posts deleted;
- some of the lessons learnt from the CIP included: being more realistic when setting milestones and not setting milestones that the Authority believed the public wanted to see, identifying benefits for projects at the outset, and communicating progress with Project Managers at the earliest opportunity;
- success would be achieved by delivering clearer outcomes for the residents of Harrow.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that:

- revenue optimisation was achieved in three stages: firstly, the initial analysis - trawling the income areas; secondly, the detailed analysis – looking at advertising and sponsorship, and thirdly, by looking at Parking Services Schools and Adult Services. Opportunities had been identified in Parking that could feed into the 2009/10 budget. The anticipated opportunities relating to sponsorship were unviable until the economy had picked up;
- political judgement had to be exercised on whether it was appropriate to charge residents in order to increase revenue optimisation and move the burden from the tax payer to the service user;
- in order for the Authority to be successful key foundations needed to be put in place, such as sound financial performance and staff management, a positive culture and effective communication with residents. When the Chief Executive joined the Council, momentum and ambition appeared to be lacking. There had been improvements in the services provided to residents, but keeping the momentum going would be a challenge. There were issues of financial management, which the current economic condition did not help. It was believed that if the Authority maintained the current level of momentum with its improvement programme, then its targets would be achieved;
- once the sickness absence had dropped below 9 days per annum it would be harder to notice any further gains;
- the waiting times for customers were average across all of the service areas. The actual time a customer might wait depended upon the service required. The Revenue and Benefits Department faced the biggest challenges with waiting times due to the complexity of the calls. All callers were given an approximate waiting time upon connection. The Authority was confident that all waiting time targets would be met;
- the Mystery Shopper project had identified that waiting times were not the most important aspect of communication with the Council. It was believed that people's perceptions of the waiting time changed if, once answered, the call was resolved quickly;
- 50% of all calls to the Council could be classified 'avoidable contact';
- none of the 'Nine Step Plan' had been achieved to the degree which the Chief Executive had planned at inception, and the bar would continue to be raised. The previous culture at the Council had been traditional and bureaucratic, and if the Council was to succeed then staff needed to be able to achieve what was within their capacity and be given the scope to make creative decisions. There had to be a move away from criticising staff for making mistakes when trying to facilitate creative change. To achieve excellence, staff needed to be offered the chance to challenge the ways in which they carried out their duties;

- the staff Well-Being Programme had been introduced 18 months ago. Health fairs had been setup, staff had been offered health benefits, there was a review of occupational health in the workplace and a Healthy Work Group had also been set up. Staff were being asked what they wanted regarding healthy living and there was also the opportunity to gain an NVQ in Healthy Eating. The programme was monitored on a quarterly basis and staff were being kept well-informed of all the changes.

The Portfolio Holder also presented detailed slides on the Council's Performance in the CPA, during which it was noted that:

- historically Harrow Council had never scored above 2 Stars. In 2007 the Council had been one point away from a 1 Star rating and in 2008 it had been one point away from a 3 Star rating. Without taking into account such information, it was very difficult to notice any discernable change;
- there had been improvements in the Financial Standing and Value for Money ratings. It was important to improve such areas in order to be able to provide residents with clear evidence that the Council was cost effective and delivered low cost services to residents;
- all areas had either seen improvements, or remained at a high level. Adults and Environment were areas that presented challenges, but the outlook was still promising;
- certain areas of the CPA had been weighted. The scores for the Adults and Corporate Assessments capped the overall upper rating that the Council could achieve, regardless of how high other areas scored;
- the Audit Commissions direction of travel statement was very positive. It was felt that the Authority was now moving forward and accelerating on a path of improvement;
- the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Benchmarking was different from the CPA in that it was not weighted, although it did use the same database of information;
- according to the PwC Benchmarking Harrow was the sixth highest performing Council in the whole of London and the second most improved in the last year;
- one of the challenges faced by the Authority was not to become complacent in the face of perceived improvement;

The interim Divisional Director of Strategy and Improvement reported on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and how it differed from the CPA. Whereas the CPA assessed only the Council's services and how it was currently performing, the CAA would assess the borough's public services including those provided by the council's partners and how these might be delivered in the future. Views of users, residents and local businesses would feed into the assessment as well as the strategies based within the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The CAA would be underpinned by four themes: sustainability; inequality; people whose circumstances make them vulnerable; and value for money. The themes would be based on key lines of enquiry carried out by the joint inspectors who would then feed into the final Organisational Assessment score. The score would be fed back in narrative terms, rather than figuratively, through publications to residents and through websites. Red and Green flags would be awarded to the Council for areas of concern and exceptional areas, respectively. The awarding of flags was not a requisite.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that:

- alongside the investment programme for staff there was also a requirement for elected Members to develop. It was important that Members had good relationships with officers, with a partnership based on an understanding of their different roles, trust, respect, honesty and openness;
- the new arrangement with the Performance and Finance and Scrutiny Sub-Committee added to Members' involvement in the assessment;
- there were risks associated with having a score for the Council based on the performance of other public services in the borough. Even so, it would be viewed positively if the Authority identified problematic areas and developed plans for improvement;

- the overall performance and the public services in Harrow would be monitored by the Harrow Chief Executives' Group;
- individual performance would be self-assessed and fed back at the meeting of the Harrow Chief Executives Group in July 2009. The overall lead was being taken by Harrow Council, although there would be specific leads within each service;
- making a website that was easy to use, whilst still offering over 700 services to residents, was difficult. The website had to be both simple and complex at the same time. Credit was given to the Web Team for creating a website that was transactional and not just promotional;
- the calendar of meetings on the website was run by the program Modern.Gov and was maintained by Democratic Services. The calendar of events was managed by the Community Events team and therefore it would be difficult to integrate the two systems.

RESOLVED: That (1) the progress of the Council Improvement Programme be noted;
(2) the latest outcomes of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment be noted.

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

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

RESOLVED: At (1) 10.00 pm to continue until 10.30 pm;

(2) 10.30 pm to continue until 10.45 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 10.43 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARK VERSALLION
Chairman