
REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2009

Chairman:	* Councillor Stanley Sheinwald	
Councillors:	* Ms Nana Asante (3) * B E Gate * Mitzi Green * Krishna James (1) * Mrs Vina Mithani * Janet Mote	* Paul Scott (1) * Anthony Seymour * Mrs Rekha Shah * Dinesh Solanki * Yogesh Teli * Mark Versallion
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) * Mr R Chauhan Mrs D Speel

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

[Note: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane attended this meeting to speak on the items indicated at Minute 649 and 650. Councillor Jean Lammiman attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 651. Councillor Mrs Kinnear attended this meeting to speak on the items indicated at Minute 650 and 654].

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

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

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Mrs Margaret Davine	Councillor Ms Nana Asante
Councillor Jerry Miles	Councillor Krishna James
Councillor Christopher Noyce	Councillor Paul Scott

642. Welcome:

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Harrow Primary Care Trust and North West London Hospitals NHS Trust, representatives for Care UK, the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services.

643. Declarations of Interest:

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
9. Housing Revenue Account Challenge Panel – Final Report	Councillor Dinesh Solanki	Personal - Cabinet Support Member to the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.
	Councillor Yogesh Teli	Personal - Cabinet Support Member to the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.

10. Response from Portfolio Holder to Grants Challenge Panel Recommendations	Councillor Yogesh Teli	Personal – Currently sat on a body that received grant money. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.
	Councillor Brian Gate	Personal – Member of the Citizen Advice Bureau Management Board. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.
11. Integrated Care Organisation for Ealing and Harrow	Councillor Mrs Vina Mithani	Personal - Currently worked for the Health Protection Agency. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on these items.
12. North West London Acute Services Review	Councillor Mrs Rekha Shah	Personal – Currently employed by Brent Council in the Community Health Team. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on these items.
	Councillor Stanley Sheinwald	Personal - Chair of the Carers' Partnership Group. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on these items.
	Councillor Brian Gate	Personal - Married to a health professional based at St Peter's Medical Centre. His daughter also currently worked part-time at two medical centres. The Member was also a patient at Spire Bushey Hospital. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on these items.
	Councillor Janet Mote	Personal - Daughter currently worked as a paediatric nurse at Northwick Park Hospital. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on these items.
	Councillor Mark Versallion	Personal - Non-Executive Director of North West London Hospitals NHS Trust. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on these items.
	Councillor Ms Nana Asante	Personal - Registered at a local GP surgery. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.
	Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane	Personal - The Member who was not a member of the Committee declared a personal interest in that he had been appointed as an observer on the Harrow Primary Care Trust Board. The Member remained in the room during the discussion and decision making on this item.

644. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

645. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put.

646. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

647. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received.

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

RESOLVED: To note that there were no references.

649. **Care UK:**

An officer introduced the report and explained that, at the request of the Committee at its meeting on 24 September 2009, two representatives of Care UK were in attendance to answer questions in relation to concerns over the quality and performance of the Care UK contract.

Following questions from Members, the Care UK representatives clarified the following points:

- service users were notified when care workers would be late or would arrive at a time different from that previously agreed. All deviations from the agreed service schedule were logged and all telephone calls were recorded;
- missed appointments were monitored using a system called CM2000. The system utilised a range of telephony based data capture technologies, which allowed Care UK to log, analyse and report on home care delivery. This ensured a cost effective and quality assured service;
- the most common cause of a care worker being late for an appointment was due to the individual spending extra time with a care user;
- continuity of care was recognised to be important and, whenever possible, service users were cared for by the same care workers;
- Care UK only employed staff that had resided and previously been employed in the UK. Staff were required to speak fluent English and references were thoroughly checked. Staff were also subject to regular and unannounced spot checks;
- Care UK had successfully reduced staff turnover from 50% to 34%. The organisation was aiming to further reduce the figure to 20%;
- though Care UK's recruitment process was robust, with all new staff subject to CRB checks, the system was not infallible. However, Care UK would not employ an individual if there were concerns over their ability to perform the required duties safely and to a high standard;
- every care user had access to a complaints form and the complaints process was explained by a care worker on the first visit;
- in order to minimise the impact of the Christmas period on care users, managers had been working with staff to identify those that would be able to work additional days over the holiday period. Standby workers were available to cover staff sickness and office based staff were fully trained and could provide additional cover if necessary;
- a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection was due to commence shortly and it was expected that Care UK would be awarded a two star rating. The organisation had previously been awarded a one star rating;

- an action plan was in place to ensure that any recommendations arising from the CQC inspection were implemented promptly;
- Care UK provided staff with non-statutory training using a combination of in-house and external trainers. As of 1 November 2009, 44% of Care UK staff had completed a relevant NVQ2 qualification. Care UK was aiming to increase this figure to 50%;
- when a complaint was received, it was logged, investigated and the outcome recorded so that trends could be identified. Complaints were monitored through monthly senior management meetings;
- Care UK operated a whistle blowing scheme through which staff could raise concerns;
- Care UK staff were required to undertake mandatory training on equality and diversity. Staff were also expected to adopt key organisational behaviours;
- all senior managers at Care UK had participated in a 360 degree feedback scheme with feedback provided by subordinates, peers and supervisors. The scheme was due to be expanded to include individuals further down the organisation's hierarchy.

A Member raised concern that, in her experience, not all service users were provided with a copy of the complaints form.

The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing stated that both he and the Council had been concerned over the quality and performance of the Care UK contract. However, resources and measures had been put in place to turn the situation around. He added that, though the situation had improved, it was important that the Council did not become complacent.

Members of the Committee stated that they felt reassured by the comments of the Care UK representatives.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

650. **Housing Revenue Account Challenge Panel - Final Report:**

A Member introduced the report and explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Challenge Panel had been commissioned following a meeting of the Performance and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 20 July 2009. The Committee had decided that the Challenge Panel should address the key elements of the proposed changes to the HRA negative subsidy system and the possible implications of a reform. The Challenge Panel had raised a number of issues and addressed the 17 questions detailed in the Department of Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) consultation document. The Challenge Panel's findings and observations had culminated in a joint response with the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing to the DCLG.

The Member added that the re-allocation of debt could, based on retrospective calculations by London Councils, potentially double the Council's existing debt from approximately £50 million to £100 million. The main issue raised by the Challenge Panel when addressing the consultation paper was the lack of detail on how the debt re-settlement would be made to work and how debt would be distributed amongst local authorities. Until further information was made available, further work was not feasible.

The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing stated that the HRA negative subsidy had accounted for the loss of approximately £6.5 million from the Council's budget in 2008/09, with the amount being paid to other authorities in England. Whilst the Government was proposing to dismantle the existing housing finance system, no changes were expected until after the next anticipated election. The Portfolio Holder added that the Scrutiny Challenge Panel had highlighted many important issues which would allow Harrow to make a case for change.

Members of the Committee stated that they were pleased with the work of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel and that it had provided a useful insight into an issue that most residents were not aware of.

A Member who was not a Member of the Committee stated that she had sat on the Challenge Panel. She stated that she had found the event informative, although Members required further information in order to fully understand how the restructuring

of the existing housing finance system would impact on Harrow. She suggested that the Committee may wish to continue to monitor the developments in relation to the reform of the HRA system.

RESOLVED: That (1) the observations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel be welcomed and noted;

(2) the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel be endorsed;

(3) the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration;

(4) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to monitor the developments in relation to the reform of the HRA system to ensure the best options were developed for the Council as further details become available.

651. **Response from Portfolio Holder to Grants Challenge Panel Recommendations:**
The Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services introduced the report and explained that the Grants Advisory Panel had met on 8 September 2009 and considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on proposed changes to the grants programme for 2010/11. The Grants Advisory Panel had forwarded its comments to the Portfolio Holder for consideration and she had subsequently agreed all the recommendations.

In outlining the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder made the following points:

- Recommendation 4 had proposed that the grants budget include an innovation fund and this was strongly supported;
- Recommendation 5 had proposed that the guidance that accompanied the grants application form give an indication of previous proportioning of the grants budget. It was hoped that the information would help manage the expectations of small groups applying for a grant for the first time;
- it would be difficult to ring fence the grants budget over a 3 year period. However, organisations would be informed that ongoing funding would be considered, provided money was available;
- Recommendation 8 proposed that not all the grants budget should be used to meet the Council's corporate priorities. The recommendation was strongly supported on the grounds that small organisations were often able to identify community needs faster than the Council and that the recommendation would help foster innovation.

Following questions from the Committee, the Portfolio Holder and an officer clarified the following points:

- the way in which grant funds were utilised was carefully monitored. Organisations that received funding were required to complete a self-assessment process;
- at its meeting on 19 November 2009, the Grants Advisory Panel had considered the individual performance of voluntary and community organisations in receipt of grant funding during 2008/09;
- the deadline for new grant applications had been 30 October 2009. 120 applications had been received. In the previous year 70 organisations had applied for funding and, of these, 64 were successful;
- all organisations applying for grant funding were subject to a comprehensive assessment to ensure that they met the Council's funding priorities. The assessment also ensured that the organisations did not duplicate the functions of any pre-existing organisations that were already receiving grant funding;
- the assessment process had been approved by Cabinet and was as clear and transparent as possible.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

652. **Integrated Care Organisation for Ealing and Harrow:**
 The Committee decided that the item would not be heard on the grounds that Members had received insufficient information from Harrow Primary Care Trust (PCT) to allow full consideration of the proposals.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the PCT Board meeting on 26 November be urged to defer any decision on the proposals, pending proper dialogue with the Committee;
- (2) PCT representatives be invited to return to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2009 to present detailed information on the proposals, after submitting all possible information to Members.
653. **North West London Acute Services Review - Public Consultation on Children's Services:**
 A representative of North West London Hospitals (NWLH) NHS Trust introduced the report and explained that the Committee would be requested to consider the proposed public consultation on the reconfiguration of paediatric services across Harrow and Brent. However, due to capacity constraints, the National Clinical Advisory Team (NCAT) and the Department of Health would be unable to review the proposed paediatric clinical model until 18 December 2009. As a result, the representative requested that the Committee arrange a special meeting to consider the final proposals in the week commencing 4 January 2010.
- The representative informed the Committee that the Acute Services Review had conducted an 18 day pre-consultation campaign across Brent and Harrow to discuss a single proposal to reconfigure children's acute services within the wider context of community based services. Five key stakeholder groups had been involved, the NHS, the Community and Voluntary Sector, Frequent Users, Young People and the General Public. In total 20 events were held and the majority of individuals broadly supported the proposals. It was felt that the pre-consultation events had helped set the groundwork for full public consultation.
- Following questions from Members, the representatives clarified the following points:
- it had not been possible to consult with all relevant community groups as many had not met during the pre-consultation period. However, the pre-consultation period had been well publicised and as many groups as possible had been invited to participate;
 - if implemented, the reconfiguration of paediatric services was more likely to affect Brent residents more than Harrow residents. The groups that had raised the most concern with the proposals had been based in Brent;
 - if public consultation was deferred until after the election period, any changes would have to be considered as part of the wider sector review. The Acute Services Project Board was concerned that the sector review could take a significant time to implement and that this would result in the needs of Harrow and Brent children being neglected. As a result, there was a need to ensure that full public consultation would be completed before the seven week purdah issued in advance of the general and local government elections.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) the Policy and Performance Lead Members for Adult Health and Social Care attend the special meeting of Brent Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2010 to consider the proposed public consultation on the reconfiguration of paediatric services across Harrow and Brent;
- (2) the Policy and Performance Lead Members report back to the Committee to provide an update on the discussions that had taken place at the meeting of Brent Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
654. **Report from the Chairman of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Overview & Scrutiny:**
 The Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee explained that the report set out the items that had been considered by the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 16 November 2009. The Member added that following discussions with officers and Members, it had been decided that the Lean Kier Housing Repairs Challenge Panel would be deferred. The decision had been made to ensure that a wider range of performance information arising from the recent Lean Review would be available for consideration by the Panel.

The Member informed the Committee that he had written to the Corporate Director of Finance to highlight the Sub-Committee's concerns over the level of budget monitoring being undertaken through the Council's SAP system. The letter also stated that the Sub-Committee would support any action taken by the directorate to improve budget monitoring across the authority.

A Member who was not a Member of the Committee stated that she had attended the meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 20 July 2009 to speak on the Lean Housing Responsive Repairs Project. She stated that she understood that the Sub-Committee would receive a further report concerning the matter in October 2009 and raised concern that this had not occurred. The Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee stated that he would investigate.

A Member stated that it was important that the work of the upcoming Lean Kier Housing Repairs Challenge Panel was not neglected following the election period. He added that the letter that had been sent to the Corporate Director of Finance should also be sent to the Chief Executive for information.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the actions arising from the minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 16 November 2009 be noted and, insofar as necessary, agreed;

(3) the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chairman's decision to defer work on the Lean Kier Housing Repairs Challenge Panel until 2010 be approved;

(4) a copy of the letter sent to the Corporate Director of Finance be forwarded to the Chief Executive.

655. **Report from Lead Members:**

A Member explained that the Safer and Stronger Communities Lead Report contained incorrect information.

RESOLVED: That (1) a revised Safer and Stronger Communities Lead Report be considered at the next normal meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

(2) the remaining Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead reports be noted and the recommendations agreed.

656. **Scrutiny Work Programme Update:**

An officer informed the Committee that the Scrutiny Department was on target to complete all projects by the end of the Municipal Year. A Member requested that officers provide the Committee with a report on the performance of the Kier contract to better understand the current situation.

RESOLVED: That the progress on the current review programme be noted.

657. **Any Other Business:**

Neighbourhood Champions

In accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, this item was admitted late to the agenda to allow Members to be briefed on the Neighbourhood Champions Scheme which had been agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 November 2009. This item had not been available at the time the agenda was dispatched and circulated.

An officer explained that the project would be introduced in two phases, the first of which to take place between November 2009 and April 2011. During the first stage, recruits would be drawn from an existing network of Neighbourhood Watch coordinators. These individuals had already been vetted, were known to the community safety team and were familiar with the role. Phase two would commence in May 2011 and would see recruitment from beyond the existing Neighbourhood Watch networks to ensure that Neighbourhood Champions reflected the demographic composition of Harrow.

The officer suggested that the Committee may wish to meet before the end of the municipal year to consider the initial implementation of the scheme. The Committee could then re-examine the scheme after a further 12 months, before the transition into the second phase.

Members of the Committee stated that, whilst the scheme could be beneficial in tackling social problems, it needed to be carefully controlled and monitored. It was noted that Hillingdon currently operated a similar scheme and that Harrow could draw upon this existing experience.

RESOLVED: That a Challenge Panel be convened in the New Year to consider the issues surrounding the implementation of the Neighbourhood Champions Scheme.

658. **Extension of the Meeting:**

In accordance with the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Rule 6 (Part 4F of the Constitution) a proposal to extend the length of the meeting to 10:30 pm, if necessary, was agreed.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.25 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR STANLEY SHEINWALD
Chairman