

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

14 JUNE 2011

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| Chairman: | * Councillor Jerry Miles | |
| Councillors: | * Sue Anderson * Kam Chana * Ann Gate * Susan Hall (4) | * Paul Osborn * Sachin Shah * Victoria Silver * Stephen Wright |
| Voting Co-opted: | (Voluntary Aided) Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece | (Parent Governors) 2 Vacancies |
| In attendance: (Councillors) | Phillip O'Dell | Minute 151 and 152 |

* Denotes Member present
(4) Denotes category of Reserve Member

142. Introductions and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Victoria Silver to her first meeting as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and expressed thanks to Councillor Bill Phillips for his contribution to scrutiny. He also welcomed the Borough Commander, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety, the Divisional Director of Community and Culture and other officers.

The Chairman indicated that with the Committee's agreement, the agenda would be re-arranged in order that item 10, Update on Recommendations from Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector, be

considered first. The items Community Safety Plan and Safer Harrow Annual Strategic Assessment would then be considered together.

143. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Councillor Susan Hall

144. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 8 - Community Safety Plan

Councillor Sue Anderson declared personal interests in that she was a neighbourhood champion and was employed by NHS Harrow. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Kam Chana declared a personal interest in that he was a neighbourhood champion. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Susan Hall declared personal interests in that she had previously been the relevant Portfolio Holder and a member of Cabinet and was also a neighbourhood champion. She also declared that she was a member of the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon unless there was discussion on specific schemes and her interest became prejudicial, in which case she would leave the room.

Councillor Phillip O'Dell, who was not a member of the Committee, declared a personal interest in that he was a neighbourhood champion. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Paul Osborn declared a personal interest in that he had previously been a member of Cabinet and was also a neighbourhood champion. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon unless there was discussion on specific schemes and his interest became prejudicial, in which case he would leave the room.

Councillor Sachin Shah declared a personal interest in that he was a neighbourhood champion. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Stephen Wright declared a personal interest in that he was a neighbourhood champion. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 10 – Update on recommendations from Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector

Councillor Ann Gate declared a personal interest in that her husband was a trustee of Harrow Association of Voluntary Service, Citizen Advice Bureau and Harrow in Europe. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

145. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 27 April 2011 and of the special meeting held on 12 May 2011 be taken as read and signed as correct records, subject to a correction to Minute 137 of the ordinary meeting in that as Councillor Ann Gate had submitted apologies to the meeting, she had therefore not taken part in the vote.

146. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 17.

147. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

148. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16.

149. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that no references had been received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

150. Update on Recommendations from Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector

The Divisional Director of Community and Culture introduced the report which provided an update on actions taken against the recommendations of the scrutiny review 'Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary Sector'. She drew Members' attention to appendix 1 to the report and the priority areas of activity going forward which had also been discussed at the Grants Advisory Panel the previous evening.

The Divisional Director of Community and Culture reported that work with the voluntary sector representatives was being undertaken to determine a replacement for the services previously provided by Harrow Association of Voluntary Service. Work was also being done to finalise the Compact funding code. An officer advised that the code had been drafted with the needs of the

voluntary sector in mind and was not expected to be finalised until October 2011.

Members expressed concern that the report was not as up to date as it should be in terms of training on the Compact and compliance with the existing grants criteria and process and that it was also not clear whether or not the Compact was a legal document. Members challenged the report in terms of whether it reflected the concerns expressed at the previous meeting. An officer advised that the actions had been updated and the Strategic Partnership had ownership of the Compact. When the Compact was written it did not have a legal status but a previous Court ruling had taken it into consideration. The officer undertook to feed the Member's comments back to the relevant officers.

In terms of a strategic Third Sector Investment Plan for 2012/13 onwards, a Member questioned whether other Councils or partners had been consulted to share benchmarking. An officer confirmed that best practice from other Councils on Third Sector finance had been taken on board and that there had been discussions with the voluntary sector.

In response to a Member's question on governance arrangements, the Divisional Director of Community and Culture advised that the Council as a whole was considering this issue. This had also been raised by the Grants Advisory Panel the previous evening.

A Member suggested that as there was to be a fundamental change from the grants process to commissioning, this matter should be included on the scrutiny work programme. This would ensure that the Committee were kept informed of progress.

RESOLVED: To

- (1) note the updates and further actions against recommendations as described in Appendix 1 to the report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment;
- (2) receive a further report in the autumn on the delivery of the Third Sector Strategy and updated action plan.

151. Community Safety Plan

In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Community Safety Plan had been admitted late to the agenda in order that it could be considered as near to the beginning of the period to which it applied as possible.

An officer introduced the report, which brought together the plans of the Council, the Police and the Probation Service as well as a range of other agencies to address crime and anti-social issues identified in the Strategic Assessment which appeared elsewhere on the agenda. He advised that its purpose was not to develop policy but to report what the various services were committed to doing. The Plan would shortly be abolished as it was not

an essential policy development tool but it was likely that there would be an update in 2012 and then no further Plan.

The Borough Commander tabled a presentation on the Restructure of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) and advised that the Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition and Cabinet had been briefed on the current position. During the course of his presentation he reported that:

- SNTs would maintain their existing structure, with an ability to temporarily move resources across ward boundaries in response to specific safer neighbourhood problem solving demand. This flexibility would mean that resources could be moved to busier wards. As the wards of, for example, Greenhill and Wealdstone had more issues, it would be helpful to move staff on a 1-2 week attachment from, say Pinner South ward, should the need arise.
- The current numbers of two Police Constables (PCs) and three Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would remain unchanged in each ward.
- Five Sergeants would be removed and some teams would be required to share a sergeant. He would need to place resources in accordance with demand. Across the Metropolitan Police Service, 150 sergeants would be removed.
- A sergeant would lead the Problem Solving and Anti Social Behaviour teams.
- The Harrow Community Board would oversee the actions of the Anti Social Behaviour response team and assist in the development of priorities for the SNT Tasking Team. The Board would comprise representatives and a deputy from each of the SNT clusters.
- SNTs should embody problem solving.
- Harrow was the only borough in London with a Community Board.

Following the presentation, Members made a number of comments and asked questions as follows:

- A Member challenged the proposals in that he felt it was a move away from SNTs. Every person in the borough had a basic right to minimum policing and he did not agree that staff should be moved across wards. The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) website stated that there were 386 police officers in Harrow and the Member suggested that 85% of the Borough Commander's staff could be moved into a problem area should the need arise. These views were not supported by some of the other Members of the Committee who felt that flexibility was the key. The Borough Commander stated that his teams had different roles and were therefore treated differently.

- Referring to the Strategic Assessment that was being considered in conjunction with the Plan, a Member drew attention to the figures in relation to thefts from motor vehicles and residential burglaries where Pinner South appeared in the top six.
- A Member reported that the Borough Commander of Brent was pleased about the flexibility of SNTs. The Member added that tasking groups was vital to getting issues resolved and that this model was an improvement.
- A Member challenged the Portfolio Holder on the level of policing in the town centre and was advised that funding of the team would continue but with 5 rather than 6 staff. An officer advised that the flexibility previously mentioned would enable a redeployment of staff should the need arise. The Member requested written confirmation that there would continue to be a town centre police team as this was not mentioned in the Plan.
- A Member questioned the Portfolio Holder on Third Party reporting sites, adding that the Hate Crime Forum had on one occasion been cancelled with only one hour's notice and two further meetings had been cancelled. She stated that if the Forum was highly valued, performance in terms of the meetings and how they were run should be improved. The Portfolio Holder undertook to look into this issue and the Member indicated that she would provide him with further detail.
- In terms of a Member's comments that the Plan lacked detailed outcomes/milestones, contained jargon and should be made more reader friendly to residents, an officer advised that there was a direct link with the Adults Treatment Plan. The Community Safety Plan had been drafted before the Police targets had been set and these were the primary indicators of community safety.
- In response to a Member's question on the creation of a Joint Intelligence Unit, it was confirmed that there was now a Joint Intelligence Group that had an IT capability in the Civic Centre. This enabled police to sit alongside local authority staff.
- A number of the statistics on page 10 of the report were particularly worrying and a Member questioned whether these were just an issue for Harrow. The Borough Commander stated that in terms of racist offences, domestic violence and hate crime, the increase was likely to be due to the increased confidence in reporting from vulnerable sections of the community.
- The consultation exercise did not mention under 18s and the common assault statistic indicated that this was an issue for 8-17 year olds. The Member questioned whether there was work being carried out in schools and any awareness training. An officer confirmed that under-18s had been consulted but had not given quantifiable results. The Plan had been considered by the Youth Parliament and there was a

young person on the Harrow Police and Community Consultative Group. Given the Member's concern in terms of common assault on boys, the officer undertook to see if there was a gap in this area.

- The Plan and the Annual Strategic Assessment appeared to contradict each other in terms of figures and therefore a Member expressed concern at their validity. An officer explained that it was difficult to get a common reporting timeframe and so there would always be a difference between figures.
- In relation to a Member's query on the active engagement of religious and community leaders, the Borough Commander advised that Harrow had a large Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population, was one of the safest boroughs and that the police had significant support from religious communities.
- Activities for teenagers were not detailed in the report but appeared to be the fifth most important issue as rated by Harrow residents. An officer advised that the chart aimed to show the relevant importance of crime against a number of other issues for the purpose of comparison.
- In terms of the Government's drug strategy, a Member questioned which agencies the Council was working with and requested a written response on what analysis had been done on drug misuse and domestic violence, and on alcohol misuse and domestic violence, given their prevalence in Harrow. An officer advised that whilst the Government had announced the strategy, a lot of the detail had yet to be worked up. Another officer advised that two pieces of work were ongoing - the Information Strategy and the Drug Intervention Programme. The latter aimed to track people through the system to identify those that had been 'lost'. The Borough Commander added that there were a large number of repeat calls in terms of domestic violence and it was necessary to act quickly on this. The majority of perpetrators had been using alcohol and/or drugs and it was often difficult to keep the victims on board in order to make a conviction.
- More evidence to support the figures would be helpful and a Member questioned whether the Council would be providing additional funding to tackle domestic violence. An officer advised that some funding was provided through the grants process and the Leader of the Council had given a guarantee that any shortfall would be met from his contingency budget. He had also requested a growth bid for funding to be mainstreamed.
- SmartWater had been rolled out two years ago and a Member questioned whether its effectiveness had been analysed and how many cases had been to Court based on its evidence. Members were advised that take up had varied across areas and that the burglary trend was being analysed. The Borough Commander reported that the MPS had launched Operation Target and whilst Harrow was not included, it was surrounded by boroughs that were (Barnet, Brent,

Hillingdon and Ealing). An officer advised that every offender that came through Harrow was scanned for SmartWater and all SNTs had wands.

- Inclusion of Member representation on the Community Board was questioned and an officer undertook to provide a written response.
- The Portfolio Holder was questioned about the ability of the Probation Service to undertake the appropriate amount of offender supervision. He advised that there was activity and would advise the Member separately on numbers.
- Better use of accident and emergency data was requested and, if possible, data from the out-of-hours walk in service.
- A Member requested an update on the case of Kevin Sweeney, a resident and victim of Hate crime that had appeared on the BBC news. The Borough Commander reported that the ring leader had been arrested.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder, Borough Commander and officers for their attendance, participation and the responses provided.

RESOLVED: That the Committee's comments on the Community Safety Plan be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

152. Safer Harrow Annual Strategic Assessment 2011/12

In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Safer Harrow Annual Strategic Assessment 2011/12, had been admitted late to the agenda due to its links with the Community Safety Plan which appeared elsewhere on the agenda.

The Committee received a report which set out the Strategic Assessment. The Strategic Assessment analysed crime data to identify the most prevalent crime and anti-social behaviour issues in Harrow and was considered by the Committee in conjunction with the Community Safety Plan.

A Member stated that the report did not set out the actions being taken to reduce fly tipping. An officer reported that there was a specialist team within Community Safety who investigated fly tipping, tried to identify the perpetrators and undertook enforcement action. In terms of wider prevention, the team was working with the Joint Intelligence and Joint Analysis Units. Clear up work and effective enforcement sustained improvements made.

Following the discussion on the Community Safety Plan and the reported need for flexibility in terms of moving SNT staff across ward boundaries, a Member drew attention to the figures in relation to thefts from motor vehicles and residential burglaries where Pinner South appeared in the top six.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(See also Minute 151)

153. Standing Scrutiny Review of the Better Deal for Residents Programme - Interim Report, Project Management

The Chairman of the Challenge Panel tabled a presentation on the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Better Deal for Residents Programme. He outlined the approach to the Review, the objectives, the summary of the Group's findings and the implications of failing to implement the recommendations.

The Committee welcomed the report and congratulated the Challenge Panel on their excellent piece of work. A Member did, however, express concern that it had been necessary for Members to do this work as the issues raised should have been addressed as a matter of course as they would be in a business. It was hoped that senior managers would take the recommendations on board. The Chairman of the Panel reported that the resident participants had been surprised that the report had been necessary and had been instrumental in strengthening the recommendations and were keen to progress the project.

Another Member echoed the views previously stated and added that a weakness was that Better Deal for Residents (BDfR) had been set up in the run up to an election. Whilst accepting its remit needed to be change, he expressed concern that the BTP Panel had been abolished. He indicated that an increase in Member oversight of the project was required.

A Member questioned whether communication in relation to improving the corporate culture for customer satisfaction and resident involvement could be addressed. The Chairman of the Challenge Panel advised that he had spoken to the manager of Access Harrow with a view to improving the board displays on the ground floor of the Civic Centre by including customer feedback. An officer added that residents had indicated that the Council should talk to them as they may know a solution to an issue better than officers. Any further review could consider how residents' opinions were being addressed.

Further to the question in relation to communication, a Member stated that the communication on BDfR had not been good. He expressed concern that there had not been a new communication plan since May 2010 and no meetings of the Communications Review Group. Another Member advised that there was a new Communications Plan and referred the Member to the Assistant Chief Executive.

The Interim Director of Finance reported that the Corporate Strategy Board had recently received a paper on project management recommending that project management should be across the local authority. It had, however, been agreed that one size did not fit all.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report from the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Better Deal for Residents Programme be agreed;
- (2) the report be referred to Cabinet in July for consideration.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.31 pm, closed at 9.50 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chairman