

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

AGENDA

DATE: Tuesday 3 April 2012

TIME: 7.30 pm

VENUE: Committee Rooms 1&2
Harrow Civic Centre

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 4)

Chairman: Councillor Jerry Miles

Councillors:

Sue Anderson
Ann Gate
Sachin Shah
Victoria Silver

Kam Chana
Barry Macleod-Cullinane
Paul Osborn (VC)
Stephen Wright

Representatives of Voluntary Aided Sector: Mrs J Rammelt/Reverend P Reece
Representatives of Parent Governors: Mrs A Khan/1 Vacancy

(Note: Where there is a matter relating to the Council's education functions, the "church" and parent governor representatives have attendance, speaking and voting rights. They are entitled to speak but not vote on any other matter.)

Reserve Members:

1. Nana Asante
2. Varsha Parmar
3. Krishna Suresh
4. Sasi Suresh
5. Krishna James

1. Chris Mote
2. Tony Ferrari
3. Christine Bednell
4. Susan Hall

Contact: Alison Atherton, Senior Professional - Democratic Services
Tel: 020 8424 1266 E-mail: alison.atherton@harrow.gov.uk

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 (To Follow)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2012 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 17 (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 15 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

6. DEPUTATIONS

To receive deputations (if any) under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4B) of the Constitution.

7. REFERENCES FROM COUNCIL/CABINET

- (a) Scrutiny Review - Debt Recovery Process - Response: (Pages 1 - 16)

Report considered by Cabinet on 8 March 2012.

- (b) Reablement Progress Response to Recommendations from Standing Scrutiny Review Group: (Pages 17 - 22)

Report considered by Cabinet on 8 March 2012.

8. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12 (Pages 23 - 58)

Report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance

9. JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (To Follow)

Report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance

10. STANDING REVIEW OF THE BUDGET - QUARTERLY REPORT (Pages 59 - 62)

Report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance

11. CUSTOMER CARE SCRUTINY REVIEW - SCOPE (Pages 63 - 70)

Report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance

12. SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER REPORT (Pages 71 - 78)

Report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance

13. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT (Pages 79 - 82)

Report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Which the Chairman has decided is urgent and cannot otherwise be dealt with.

AGENDA - PART II

Nil

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REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	8 March 2012
Subject:	Scrutiny Review – Debt Recovery Process – Response
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Julie Alderson, Interim Corporate Director Resources
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance & Business Transformation
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Response

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides a draft response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny review, for consideration and endorsement by Cabinet.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to endorse the responses recommended by officers.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To provide an appropriate response to the Scrutiny recommendations and to improve the effectiveness of the handling of exceptional cases.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

Cabinet received the report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee following their review of how the recovery process works in relation to vulnerable debtors and their examination of 3 key case studies.

The recommendations of the review and their implementation are aimed at improving the way our vulnerable debtors are dealt with and at ensuring early bespoke action occurs to stop recovery action escalating. Additionally it would bring more of a balance between safeguarding the council's income and safeguarding the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents.

Some of the recommendations are shown as requiring further consideration and discussion to identify specific actions to implement them. These will be discussed as appropriate with relevant Portfolio Holders, Corporate Directors and their teams and Scrutiny leads to agree ways forward.

Options considered

Not applicable.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Where additional resource is involved in implementing recommendations this will be contained within existing provision.

Performance Issues

The recommendations of the review and their implementation are aimed at securing improved income collection whilst safeguarding the well being of our vulnerable residents. Introducing more sophistication into income collection should improve collection performance whilst reducing complaints.

Environmental Impact

None.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Equalities implications

In performing its role as local authority the council is required to have due regard to the public sector equality duty, which is a continuing duty. It is recognised that debt collection has implications for everyone who pays monies to the council, but that it has the potential to affect some sections of the community more than others, including those with low incomes, mental health problems or those that simply do not understand English or are confused by the process. If the recommendations of this report are accepted

for action then further consideration of the equality implications will be undertaken where appropriate in respect of particular proposed actions."

Corporate Priorities

The Scrutiny review and the response to it aim to enhance reporting on and monitoring of the delivery of all Council Priorities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Jenny Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	17 February 2012		
Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	17 February 2012		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	Martin Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date:	17 February 2012		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name:	John Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date:	21 February 2012		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Fern Silverio – Divisional Director, Collections & Housing Benefits. Tel 020 8736 6818

Background Papers:

Scrutiny review report presented to Cabinet 13 December 2011 available

Appendix 1

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]

Debt Recovery: Harrow Council's Approach to Debt Recovery Response to final Scrutiny review report

Areas highlighted in the report - specific to the services reviewed , - Revenues, Housing & Adult Social Care (income collection areas)

- Council appears to be applying its recovery policies in a manner which does not take into account of what are at times very distressing personal circumstances of our residents.
- Council needs to operate in a way that protects the Council's financial interests but also reduces the impact on the most vulnerable of our debtors.
- Resident's experience of the recession may increase their indebtedness. Increased unemployment, increased incidents of mental health problems, family breakdowns, the impact of multiple debts all mean that the pool of people in debt and subject to recovery policies is likely to expand.
- Harrow Law Centre drew attention to types of cases (regarding rent collection); not people who won't pay but people who can't pay, people who are vulnerable perhaps as a result of language difficulties, mental health problems or physical disability.
- Current process does not accommodate or offer sufficient safeguards to those residents who are experiencing difficulties.
- No means within the corporate/council tax debt recovery process through which the council can identify vulnerable cases
- There should be In house evaluation of vulnerability at critical and later stages of the recovery process. This should be before bankruptcy procedures and before foreclosure on a home. Establishing the **assessment at some critical point in the process is absolutely essential and this is our core recommendation.**

Recommendations not specific to the corporate debt function:

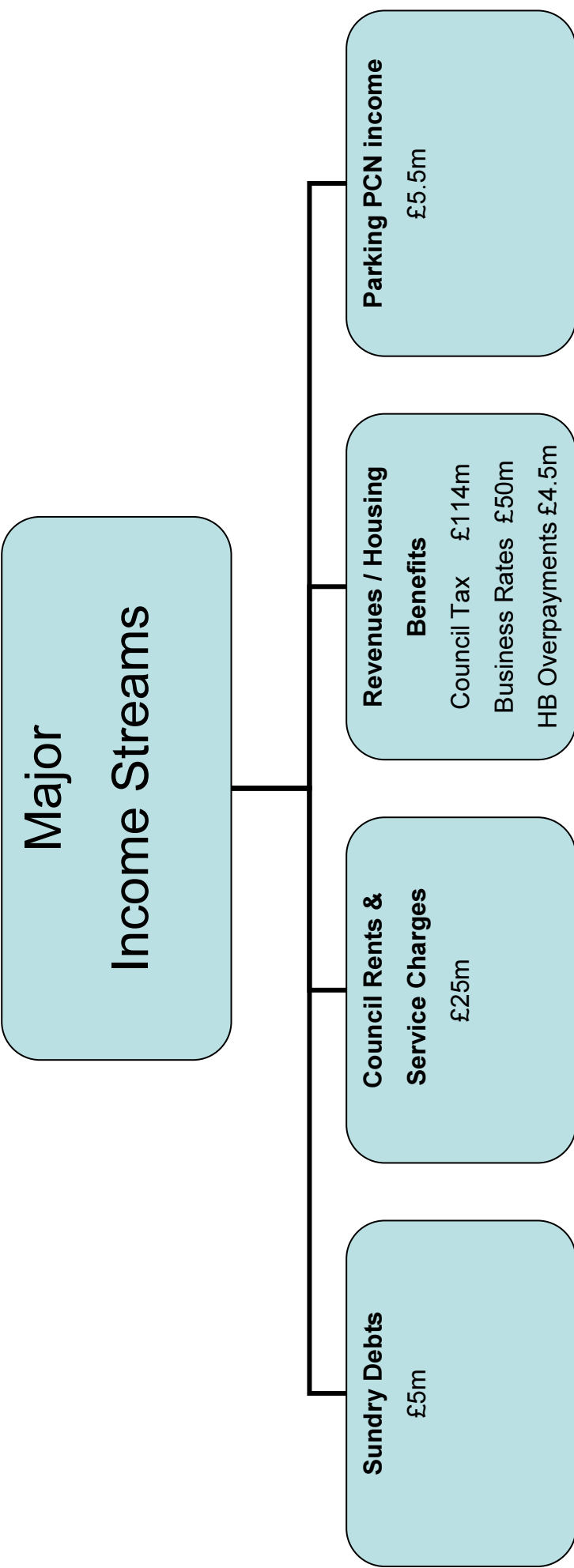
- The potential integration of all debt recovery services with the central recovery service should be further investigated. No integration should take place until the central service has been able to introduce a process for identification of vulnerable residents as above
- The council should improve communication processes within the organisation and with external agencies in order to facilitate a greater understanding of the level and impact of debt within the community. They share certain lessons learnt processes and procedures
- The council should show how it will improve how it signposts residents who are experiencing financial/debt difficulties to sources of advice and advocacy in the borough

Response

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Officers welcome the suggestions made by Scrutiny and understand that councillors are concerned that the Council's application of its debt recovery procedures may be having an adverse impact on our more vulnerable residents. Officers also note that councillors accept that our debt recovery is no more rigorously applied than in other London Boroughs although anecdotal evidence has led to the opinion that uniform application of the policy was resulting in a disproportionate adverse impact on a small number of vulnerable residents.

There are a number of services which manage income collection and currently these are located in various different Departments. For reference, the diagram below sets out the main areas which manage income and debt collection.



Sundry Debtors – This covers a variety of debt types including commercial rents, planning & building control fees, PCT, West Waste, licensing fees, adult social care charges, service charges etc. Generally these are debts which are raised and invoiced by our central Corporate Accounts Receivable/Payable Team (CAP/CAR Team) and have no specific legislation governing their collection. Collection occurs in most cases by simply invoicing the debtors. Recovery escalations are normally carried out by our legal team via County Court judgments and charges on property. For commercial rents, repossession of property using County Court bailiffs is also used.

Rents – Collections are managed by the Housing Department. Arrears are around £1.2m, of which £750k relate to former tenants who have moved away. Rent recovery, is in most cases, carried out by the Housing staff although escalations, eg repossessing of property due to failure to pay rent, is carried out by our legal service.

Council Tax / Business Rates / Parking – All of these 3 areas are already centralised under the Revenues Division within Corporate Resources Directorate. Council Tax arrears are approximately £4.5m, Business Rates arrears £1.5m and PCN outstanding monies at any one time around £2-3m.. Recovery of these debts is carried out by the relevant service's staff using specific legislation. Here the authority is granted either liability (court) orders or county court warrants following which use of bailiffs, attachment of benefits, attachment of earnings, committal to prison or bankruptcy are all used as recovery tools.

Our response to specific key comments in the report will hopefully assure councillors that officers have listened and are putting in place some key processes to increase safeguards.

Specific recommendations

Recommendation	Response
<p>BEST PRACTICE For Cabinet:</p> <p>We recommend that steps be taken to improve the application of the various debt management policies. By this we mean:</p> <p>1. The central debt recovery service should develop a process for the identification of vulnerable residents and reviewing their cases at appropriate stages in the central debt recovery process.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted. However there are steps which local authorities are obliged to follow so that non-payers are reminded about their debt and warned about what could happen next if they do not pay. These mandatory steps have been established in legislation in certain areas to enable local authorities to manage high volumes of cases in a cost efficient way. It is a balance to ensure that customers are given the right information but without notices becoming too threatening and not encouraging them to</p>

Recommendation**Response**

approach the council if they are having difficulties. Some of the content is dictated by regulation but all of our notices give contact details and information about how to apply for Council Tax Benefit and other reliefs and reductions and where to seek free help from independent organisations.

Regarding domestic rents there is a separate process and a pre-action protocol to comply with when the rent is in arrears. This requires benefit checks and advice to be offered, and in addition there are specific requirements in relation to disability issues which also have to be considered before possession action is taken.

Every year we consult with colleagues in Access Harrow and the Citizen's Advice Bureau to review what worked well and what did not work so well so we continually strive to improve our notices to make them clear to understand for customers. This improves communication ensuring our customers will better understand what we expect of them. We will enhance these liaisons meetings to explore how this can further identify vulnerability at an earlier stage. This year we have also incorporated the signpost to the Money Advice service which provides a free online health check for customers on financial fitness following a request from the Recession Busting Group.

We will review our internal processes to help identify vulnerable people and ensure that we have the information to make the right decision about the most appropriate recovery route. This check will be made at the beginning of any decision making checklist or process to prevent further recovery being taken. This will include contacting other departments as part of the escalation checks to ensure we are aware of the total debts owed to the council but also to ensure that another department does not already have that address or resident flagged as vulnerable; e.g. mental health issues, frail pensioner etc. An example of this would be working with the Fairer Assessment Team and asking them to add a check to the Council Tax Team where they are supporting residents to stay in their own homes to ensure that they are receiving the maximum assistance available but also to if necessary to review the recovery route being taken to ensure it is still appropriate.

Recommendation**Response**

We already write to all our council tax debtors asking for details about whether they are in work or on benefits so that if appropriate an attachment to earnings or their benefit can be done. This includes referring customers to free debt advice services if they are having other financial difficulties. The process also encloses a leaflet about the bailiff and the fees that may be charged if the customer does not contact the office. Our aim is to ensure the customer co operates in providing information so that we can endeavour to chose the best route to meet the individual's needs. This has been recently updated to incorporate comments made by staff, customers and the panel including highlighting that certain actions may lead to your home being lost and substantial costs being incurred.

Refresher training on payment arrangements will be given to staff in 2012 which will cover what to do if customers return these forms indicating that they are on any type of state benefit or if they state they have no income. We will contact the Royal College of Psychiatrists to see if they have developed a training package following their report in November 2010 about debt collection and mental health and also to gain their input on any corporate mental health policy in terms of not only recovery but also access to services.

We are aware that problems do arise specifically regarding customers who may simply ignore demands or warning notices. Some people may not be aware of the range of help that may be available to them. Unless we are made aware of the individual circumstances we are unable to see if we are able to help. This issue in particular needs to tie in with identifying customers who may have mental health issues. In the current climate it is acknowledged that the many pressures customers find themselves under may lead to an increase in mental health problems and subsequently a difficulty in dealing with financial crisis and our task in collecting debts. We will review our procedures taking into account Data Protection issues as clearly some data can only be used for certain functions. A draft standard letter has been provided to the Information Manager so that it can be issued to the following asking for disclosure.

Recommendation**Response**

- fairer charging team
- mental health teams
- PCT
- CAB

The LGO has recently issued guidance to local authorities following some high profile cases regarding bankruptcy. We will adopt this guidance which in effect will ensure council officers make reasonable steps to contact the debtor in person including visiting their home if necessary not only for bankruptcy cases but for any large balances where we are considering further recovery action of

- insolvency
- committal
- charging orders

We will ensure we carry out the following before progressing the matter; a senior officer will only make a decision to pursue bankruptcy after

- a. Reviewing an accurate history of the debt and the attempts to recover it
- b. Considered information about the past, present, disputed or outstanding benefit claims or any applications for discounts or exemptions
- c. Assessed if the debtor has assets to clear the debt if the bankruptcy is pursued
- d. Assessed that there is no realistic prospect of collecting the debt in any other manner in a reasonable timeframe
- e. Gathered sufficient information about the debtors circumstances
- f. Considered whether the debtors failure to pay/respond to other recovery measures could arise from a disability
- g. Considered whether the personal circumstances of the debtor warrant them being protected from the consequences of recovery action

An authorisation sheet has been drawn up for each case which covers not only the above but also items from the panel such as:-
- Is there a history of small multiple debts

Recommendation**Response**

- What is the payment history if previously good consider a home visit
- Is there awareness by the customer of the process being recommended and the potential implications
- if a known disabled household what reasonable adjustments have been made

We are also currently looking into access to the CRM system as part of the cross check as if more contact is logged via AH it should be recorded there which give staff an indication of what department will may need to be contacted.

2. The potential integration of all debt recovery services with the central recovery service should be further investigated.

Although we as a Council have not yet centralised all debt recovery and currently operate distinct services where debt collection occurs, (the Corporate Accounts receivable/Sundry debtor team, Revenues Service and Housing Rents service) the issue is being looked into. We are already aligning policies to ensure that customers with multiple debts will be dealt with in a consistent and transparent manner. We will work towards a consistent corporate definition of vulnerable and introduce checklists to encourage joint working and the sharing of information between departments and partners as recommended by both the LGO and the Information Commissioner.

Adult Social care have also started to review their recovery policy which will address concerns and incorporate best practice. Again this will benefit from the work to be done on defining vulnerability. The area has additionally introduced with immediate effect Director level sign off before a formal recovery process is instigated.

A clear steer is however still needed from the Information Manager / legal on the steps needed to avoid any conflict with Data Protection including potential disclaimers on all Council forms and notices about data sharing which would ease any potential conflicts. We will be ensuring all departments do this which could also cover the confidentiality issues regarding disclosure of mental health problems which has been identified as a barrier in customers coming. Access Harrow phone messages and receipts should also incorporate a standard disclaimer to this affect.

Recommendation**Response**

The above will allow a view of the combined debt that a customer has which will allow officers to see how proportionate a particular recovery route may be as there may be different recovery routes based on the different legislation. This will also introduce more joined up working, a must in ensuring we act appropriately and in full knowledge of all the facts.

We will reinstate the corporate enforcement working group which began in June 2010 with the original remit as below:

“A number of different departments carry out enforcement functions and there is a varying degree of specialism and knowledge concerning our duties in relation to criminal investigations. It struck me that it would be useful if the Council had a corporate prosecutions group, with representatives across all enforcement departments. The group could share good practice, deliver and organise training, take a view on corporate matters relating to criminal investigations and generally support and assist each other.”

This can be expanded to pull together not just the knowledge in relation to criminal investigations but also a forum for taking further cases studies and pulling out lessons learnt to incorporate in any central debt recovery processes. This network would also, subject to clearance from the information management team/legal, provide staff with points of contact for cross checking. A draft information sharing document was drawn up by legal and this can now be resurrected and passed for review to the information management team.

A recommendation can be made that any Council inspection/visiting staff including 1/3rd party contractors be given specific training on identifying clues to vulnerability and where identified by whichever department that this be captured centrally and

Recommendation**Response**

incorporated into checklists for departments collecting debt to cross check to. The training to also include what route to follow should vulnerability be identified so that the resident receives the appropriate support promptly.

There is the potential to collate all debts from the different systems used by the Council currently so that staff can see the true picture of the customer indebtedness. This will allow staff to make more informed decisions about either payment arrangements or alternative recovery routes and any corporate debt policy would be able to set different levels of monies outstanding for the different debt types to trigger different actions.

As more services move over to Access Harrow there is an opportunity to develop the skills of the OSS and CC staff to probe for both the true circumstances of the customer but also to cross check facts, entitlements and monies owing. As more services move over to using Civica W2, subject to access being allowed, the process of cross checking can become more streamlined without impacting on other service areas to get information. If a clear corporate debt policy existed for all debts across the council, it would be possible to provide AH staff with a decision making matrix to follow to be able to give clear and transparent guidance and decisions to customers with multiple debts.

3. The council should improve communication processes within the organisation and with external agencies in order to facilitate a greater understanding of the level and impact of debt within the community. Lesson learnt, processes and procedures should be shared.

Although some of the issue has been covered in points 1 & 2, officers will put in place enhanced communication to facilitate joint working. We are currently tendering for bailiff and debt recovery agent services and appointing contractors under one corporate contract will ensure the same firms are used across the council for all council debts where certificated bailiffs / debt recovery agents can be used. This in itself will join up action at the critical stage. Contractors will also be required to develop new processes where they inform council officers of vulnerability as they came across cases. Contractors such as bailiffs / debt recovery agents will be provided with the council's vulnerability policy and will be additionally asked to offer signposting to advice and advocacy agencies within Harrow. As such officers will redesign the services so that interventions are earlier and more targeted.

As more services first point of contact are now via Access Harrow, and with documents

Recommendation**Response**

being available via Civica W2, information will, subject to the authorisation on information sharing, be available from the desktop.

Collating the information about multiple debts will mean that we will be able to plot where high debts arise and if appropriate arrange workshops in those local areas to:-

- maximise the take up of benefits,
- work with others from the 1/3rd sector in enabling customers to understand clearly what they should be doing
- talking to residents to find out what the barriers are to them paying their bills e.g. closure of a post office/bank

Resurrecting the corporate enforcement group will provide a forum for lessons learnt to be discussed and shared and the Corporate Complaints officer can also feed into this any trends or issues from an objective view.

4. The council should show how it will improve how it signposts residents who are experiencing financial/debt difficulties to sources of advice and advocacy in the borough.

This has been touched in the earlier response but taking into account of the economic climate, officers will review information on Harrow's website and add to it, we will work with our external partners such as the CAB to ensure the worst debt cases are expedited and given debt advice at the earliest opportunity, and will implement a targeted advertising campaign in the new financial year to bring awareness of debt support to those who may need it.

Refresher training on debt advice will also be considered for staff in the relevant areas that come into contact with debtors so we are better prepared to deal with financial hardship & vulnerability.

Adult services will refresh the debt management advice currently available on its Shop4Support site in line with the above review of information used to sign post.

If as above a matrix can be drawn up for staff to use to apply the corporate debt policy, this can incorporate key stages to refer customers to sources of advice for use at the OSS and CC.

Recommendation**Response**

Recommendations not specific to the corporate debt function:

A) A member suggested that the debt collection process across the Council appeared fragmented and that he felt that the panel should investigate this.

The Interim Corporate Director of Resources agrees that there is some fragmentation and that as in her statutory role she needs to have an overarching view of debt, she already has a piece of work planned to progress this area.

Although work is at an early stage, there appears to be no reason why housing and sundry debts should not be dealt with centrally in a corporate team. The exception is possession proceedings which are complex and require specialised legal input.

The issue will be looked at further once the outcomes of the examination of the area is completed.

It must be understood that some of the actions will take up time and will impinge on existing resources. The collection services, like all other services have cut back budgets and capacity is becoming an issue. Whilst officers will endeavour to put in place the above, it will only continue and become integrated into processes on the basis that sufficient resources and capacity exists within the areas.

Coordinated by Fern Silverio – Divisional Director, Collections & Housing Benefit

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 8 March 2012

Subject: Reablement Progress Response to Recommendations from Standing Scrutiny Review Group

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Bernie Flaherty, Divisional Director Adult Social Care

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Margaret Davine, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the progress response on Recommendations from the Standing Scrutiny Review Group.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet note the response to Recommendations from the Standing Scrutiny Review on the Reablement service.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To provide an appropriate response to the Scrutiny recommendations.

Section 2

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1.1 Harrow established the new Reablement service on 25th October 2010 as a key part of the overall transformation of Adult Social Care and the whole systems approach adopted in Harrow. A First year Report was submitted to Cabinet in November 2011.

At its meeting on 19 January 2012, Cabinet received a reference and a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 December 2011, which provided a quarterly update on the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Better Deal for Residents, including recommendations for Cabinet's consideration. Cabinet agreed to receive the reference and asked officers to submit a response report to the 8 March 2012 Cabinet meeting.

- 2.1.2 Following a meeting with BdR Standing Review Group a number of Recommendations were made by the Standing Review Group and have been completed as follows:

Reabling Focused Care

Recommendation	Action and Response
<p>1) It is possible the term "Reablement" is not well understood by residents and this might impact on the number of applications for the service</p>	<p>We have not had any concern about a lack of applications for the Reablement service. Our modelling suggests that up to 9000 people have received a Reablement service by the year-end. This is higher than other boroughs have experienced.</p> <p>There is a clear pathway to access Reablement. This is through Access Harrow which is called by anyone who feels they have a social care need. A robust tracking system ensures that any feed back from clients is responded to and supports service improvement. Since the Reablement service was introduced we have received no negative comments about the name, but of course, we remain open to any future feedback that may require us to reconsider this.</p> <p>Reablement is a National led initiative, which has received extensive publicity. Regular communications and articles in the Harrow People and local papers have provided detailed descriptions of the Reablement service and case studies. This level of publicity will</p>

	<p>continue to be provided to ensure that residents overall understanding of the term “Reablement” is a priority for Adult Social Care.</p>
<p>2) The “Triageopoly” poster is detailed and full of useful information but it would be better suited as a leaflet/handout rather than as a wall poster. A new wall poster should be designed that briefly explains the service, eligibility and how to apply taking note of the point above,</p>	<p>Service Users led the design of “Triageopoly”. This has also been developed as a leaflet.</p> <p>Further work is on-going to improve information about Reablement as the service continues to develop.</p> <p>Following Scrutiny the Triageopoly image has been added to the Council’s Shop4Support Web site in interactive format. This means that detailed descriptions are available on each part of the Board so that people can find a full description of every point in the service journey.</p>
<p>3) The group also considered there was a need for continuous communication of the service not only through existing channels but also to a wider audience including grant and non-grant aided voluntary and community organisations to increase the awareness and understanding of residents who would be potential users of the service.</p>	<p>Please see response to Recommendation 1 above.</p> <p>Regular updates on the Reablement service are provided at Voluntary Sector Forums, user forums and various meetings such as Sheltered Warden meetings.</p> <p>The Reablement team have also shared information with GPs and other professional groups. They have worked with Voluntary organisations across the Borough to ensure that they understand the service and are able to sign-post clients.</p> <p>Adult Social Care will continue to liaise with a wide range of stakeholders to provide information and updates on the Reablement service. Plans to extend communication via Libraries and other assets in the new Directorate are being developed.</p>
<p>4) The service should monitor the number of residents applying to utilise the scheme in order that increasing demand, if any is identified early.</p>	<p>A sophisticated tracking system has been established as part of the Reablement service. This ensures that we are able to monitor the number of clients requiring a Reablement service and the level of need locally.</p>

	<p>This tracking system has been working effectively and has helped us to identify an increase in referrals during the winter months.</p>
<p>5) The service should consider piloting different models for the delivery of Reablement to identify if changes to the length of the Reablement period may give rise to further savings without detrimental impact to the residents,</p>	<p>Reablement is provided for up to 6 weeks. The period of Reablement is flexible according to the needs of clients.</p> <p>Reablement service delivery and outcomes are kept under constant review and is able to evolve constantly.</p> <p>For example, there has been a recent introduction of the Reablement Skills and Support Programme. This is held in Bentley NRC and is an example of the responsiveness of the service to service user feed-back. Reablement clients asked for a group activity outside of the home to help them improve mobility and share information and techniques on managing issues such as pain, nutrition and anxiety. Feed back from Recipients of this programme to date has been very positive.</p> <p>Year 2 of the Reablement initiative involves offering a whole suite of Reablement services to both new and existing users with different lengths of Reablement provision. This will be added to our tracking programme.</p>

Options considered

Not applicable.

Financial Implications

The Financial Implications of Reablement are monitored closely and reported through the monthly financial monitoring report to CSB and quarterly financial monitoring report to Cabinet.

Performance Issues

Both the numbers of reablement users and the related quality assurance measures will be monitored on a regular basis.

Environmental Impact

There are no direct impacts. However, the Harrow Housewarmers Project is seeking to develop better links with the Reablement project because of the strong link between living in cold homes and adverse impacts on health.

Risk Management Implications

N/a

Equalities implications

During February 2011 a full EqIA was undertaken in relation to the Reablement Service and realignment of Adult Social care. As part of the process of completing the EqIA, service users, staff and other stakeholders were consulted. No direct discrimination was identified and the full EqIA is available as supporting documentation.

Corporate Priorities

Supporting and protecting people who are most in need

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jennifer Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 16 February 2012		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 16 February 2012		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Martin Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 16 February 2012		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker

on behalf of the
Divisional Director
(Environmental
Services)

Date: 16 February 2012

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Jonathan Price- Head of Service Reablement and Personalisation

Background Papers: N/A

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

*[Call-in does not apply to decisions
that are for noting only]*

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date:	3 rd April 2012
Subject:	Scrutiny Annual Report 2011-12
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	All
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Scrutiny Annual Report 2011 - 12

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The scrutiny annual report, 2011 – 12 is attached to this report. The report summarises the activities of the scrutiny committees and the scrutiny lead councillors and outlines priorities for the next municipal year.

Recommendations:

Councillors are asked to:

- i. Agree the content of the annual report
- ii. Refer the annual report to Full Council

Section 2 – Report

The council's constitution requires that the activities of the Overview and scrutiny committee and associated sub committees are publicly reported each year. The constitution also requires that this annual report is received by Full Council.

This year's report includes reports from each of the scrutiny committees – the main Overview and Scrutiny committee, the Performance and Finance sub committee and the Health and Social Care sub committee – and from each pair of scrutiny leads – Adult Health and Social Care, Children and Young People, Corporate Effectiveness, Safer and Stronger Communities and Sustainable Development and Enterprise.

The report highlights the issues which have been considered and the projects which have been undertaken. It also indicates potential priorities for the coming municipal year.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Performance Issues

There are no performance issues associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

Equalities implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

Corporate Priorities

The report covers all areas of the council's activity.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background

Papers

Contact:

Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny 020 8420 9387

Background Papers:

None

Scrutiny Annual Report 2011-2012



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Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Our committee

The Overview and Scrutiny committee has continued to meet during the 2011/12 municipal year and we were pleased to welcome Cllr Victoria Silver to the committee's membership in May. We would like to thank Cllr Bill Phillips for the contribution he made to scrutiny as a member of the committee since his election in May 2010. We should also like to welcome Mrs Aamirah Khan who was appointed to the committee in September as a Parent Governor.

The committee has met 12 times this year, a reduction since last year which reflects the fact that we have given over some of our meetings to increase the regularity of the meetings of the other two scrutiny committees.

We have considered a wide range of issues and commissioned a number of reviews, all of which are detailed below.

Our meetings

As in previous years the Overview and Scrutiny committee has welcomed the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to two of our meetings. At the first of these meetings, in November, the focus for discussion was the council's response to the significant changes in the policy environment in which we must now operate. The second meeting, in January, discussed the strategic financial issues confronting the council as the 2012/13 budget is prepared. We would like to thank Cllr Stephenson and Michael Lockwood for attending the meeting and answering our questions.

During the year we considered a wide range of issues at the committee:

- Community Safety Plan
- Safer Harrow Annual Strategic Assessment
- Transfer of Harrow High Schools to Academies
- Integrated Targeted Children's Services Model
- Schools Place Planning
- Development of the Council's Property Assets
- Implications of the 'Birmingham Judgement'
- Adults, Children's and Corporate Complaints
- West London Waste Plan
- Strategic Overview of Support to the Voluntary Sector and Update on the 3rd Sector Strategy
- Strategic Approach to the Future Provision of the Library and Sports Service
- Corporate Equalities Objectives

Meetings with the Portfolio Holders

A number of portfolio holders have attended meeting of the committee this year and we would like to thank them for their engagement with us:

- In June, *Cllr O'Dell, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder*, attended with the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Dal Babu, to discuss the Community Safety Plan;
- On 5th July, *Councillors Green, Children's Services Portfolio Holder and Brian Gate, Schools and Colleges Portfolio Holder*, attended to discuss children's issues – including academies, the restructure of children's services and planning school places;
- On 20th July, *Councillors Henson, Customer Services and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder, Idaikkadar, Property and Major Contracts Portfolio Holder and Stephenson in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation* attended to discuss the Birmingham Judgement, the council's property assets and PCT finances;
- In September *Cllr Davine, Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder* attended to discuss the adults' service annual complaints report;
- In December, *Cllr Perry Community and Cultural Services Portfolio Holder* attended to discuss developments in the Council's relationship with the Third Sector
- In March *Cllr Henson Customer Services and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder*, attended to discuss the Corporate Equalities Objectives

In the context of the significant changes being contemplated by the authority and given the need for major budget reductions, we look forward to continuing our discussions with portfolio holders over the coming months.

Working with Residents

We continue to work with the scrutiny pool of advisors to ensure that a resident perspective is incorporated in all of our work. In addition to the statutory parent governor and faith school representatives on the main committee, scrutiny reviews have this year been supported by a number of local residents, to whom we are most grateful. Specifically we would like to thank:

- Julie Browne
- Ann Diamond
- Seamus English
- Elizabeth Hugo
- Cliff Lichfield
- Julian Maw
- Hema Mistry
- Deven Pillay
- Linda Robinson

We are also extremely grateful to the members of Harrow Youth Parliament who supported the Engaging Young People review (see below) and to all of the residents who have participated in the consultations we have undertaken during the year

We have continued to expand our social media presence via Facebook and Twitter and have introduced 'The Friday Question' as a means of attracting people to the scrutiny pages. We are now being followed by 62 people on Twitter! Although we haven't had a huge amount of success so far, we will continue to try to exploit new media in order to ensure we reach as far as possible into the Harrow community.

Review Programme

The committee has undertaken a number of reviews this year, the paragraphs below give you more information about each of these reviews. The council is facing challenges on many fronts and we therefore took the decision to have a more fluid and flexible approach to the development of our work programme and not tie ourselves down to a predetermined annual review programme. As a result we have been able to respond as necessary to support the organisation to rise to its current challenges.

Standing Review of Better Deal for Residents

The first phase of the review considered the effectiveness of the council's project/programme management function and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet which were, for the most part, accepted for implementation by the organisation. Having satisfied itself of the effectiveness of the project management process, in its second phase the review has begun to consider:

- The extent to which new projects have followed the revised project management process and in particular, the extent to which they have investigated their potential impact on local people:
- The extent to which anticipated project outcomes have been achieved for those projects which have now completed – in particular the project's impact on local people.

As new projects come on line, information will be shared with the review group and relevant officers will be invited to discuss the detail of their projects with the review. In this way, by specifically investigating how well the potential impact on residents has been anticipated, the scrutiny review will hopefully ensure that the council does not end up in the same position as Birmingham City Council which was deemed to have contravened equalities legislation by failing to fully consider the impact of their own budget changes on residents.

All completed projects will also be considered by the review in order to establish how far they have delivered the anticipated outcomes, especially the impact on residents. So far the group have met with officers from Adults Social Care to consider the outcomes of the 'Reabling Focused Care' project, officers from Corporate Finance to consider the impact of the 'Concessionary Travel' project, officers from Community and Cultural Services to consider the impact of the 'Libraries RFID' project and officers from Environmental Services to consider changes to 'Public Realm' services.

Where the review feels that its view on any new or completing project needs to be considered by Cabinet, then reports will be presented outlining these views. Quarterly reports of the reviews activities will also be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny committee. As this is a standing review, it is not anticipated that there will be a 'final' report until the end of the administration.

Standing Review of the Budget

This project began to meet during 2011. It has been established to enable scrutiny to take a long term view of the council's financial performance and to investigate the implications of the significant changes to the financial policy framework.

The review has met five times this municipal year and has begun the consideration of a number of strategic financial issues:

- Development and strategic use of the capital budget
- Housing Revenue Account self financing
- Contract renewal management and oversight
- Business Rate Retention proposals
- Localisation of Council Tax Benefit
- The Localism Act

The review group expect to submit their first report to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in the spring and after this regular quarterly reports will be submitted to the committee

Council's Use of Performance Information - Phase Two

This review took a detailed look at the future development of a local performance framework for the council, in the context of the loosening Government requirements for performance reporting. It followed on from a review undertaken last year of the council's corporate scorecard by directorate. The review was divided into three sections, looking at best practice, customer engagement and technology/data presentation.

Examination of best practice showed Harrow's approach to be on a par with other well-performing authorities. However, we felt that there was an opportunity to improve reporting to the public and also the speed at which the performance information reaches scrutiny. On the latter, significant headway has been made and we hope that the full effect of this will be felt in 2012/13.

On customer engagement, the review group held a focus group to understand residents' views on performance information. Unsurprisingly, there were a range of views about how much information should be made available and in what format, but key themes that emerged were cost effectiveness, transparency and accountability. As part of the review we also surveyed ward councillors and managers about their information requirements.

With regard to technology and data presentation, the review concluded that there is considerable scope to make better use of information from systems such as the customer relationship management (CRM) system. We were impressed by the way in which consideration had been given to the use of data and information by the public realm and libraries transformation projects; it is imperative that future transformation projects consider how services can become more data-rich and how this intelligence can be used to improve services and performance reporting.

Overall the review recommended that the following principles should underpin Harrow's local performance management framework:

- *Performance information and data is the start of the conversation.* Both Members and officers must be active rather than passive users of information. Councillors should be more

demanding of data and officers should consider what they are trying to demonstrate and how best to present it.

- *Managing performance with data rather than with too many indicators.* Given that there is less national pressure to monitor specific performance indicators the Council should shift its focus to identifying indicators that are locally useful and making better use of data to understand performance and support decision-making.
- *To make more data public.* By doing so the Council can improve transparency and accountability as well as encouraging others to share data by leading the way.
- *A positive performance management culture.* This is one that is not 'red adverse'. Improvement is much more than just measuring. The improvement cycle encompasses leading, setting priorities, planning, measuring impact, learning and revising. It is continuous and iterative – making things better step-by-step. Scrutiny has a constructive role to play in supporting such processes.

There is a need to make performance management fit for purpose in the public sector landscape. There is potentially huge freedom to recast and redesign how the council thinks about improving services and responding to local people's needs. It offers an opportunity to talk to local people about how to do this. It means putting performance management information – and evidence-based policy-making – at the centre.

Engaging Young People

At the request of the Executive, we were asked to review how the Council can most effectively engage with young people. The main ambition of the review was to understand the context and business case for involving young people in decision making to help them be more effective in making a contribution to community life. The review also aimed to stimulate debate about how the Council, in times of austerity, can find new ways to involve young people in decision making as well as offer opportunities for young people to develop employability skills through volunteering.

In order to do this, the review group undertook a number of different activities, engagement with young people in their own right, to ensure that it heard the voices of as many young people and professionals as possible. This included desktop research, going out to talk to a number of national experts, visiting other local authorities, holding a drop-in sessions and focus groups for young people at the youth centre, running survey to capture young people's views. We also used the residents' panel survey and social media platforms to capture a wider audience.

This scrutiny project represented a new and innovative approach to undertaking a scrutiny review – a collaborative project with young people. We are extremely grateful to the Harrow Youth Parliament for agreeing to lead this review and steer its direction, and for co-owning the review's final report and recommendations, which is anticipated to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May.

Debt Recovery

The Corporate Effectiveness Leads have spent significant time during the last 18 months considering the council's debt recovery process. Their investigation suggested that the council's approach to debt recovery and referrals to bailiffs etc is in line with that of other authorities, however anecdotal evidence has led to the opinion that uniform application of the policy was having an adverse impact on a small number of particularly vulnerable residents.

As a result of this initial investigation the Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned a challenge panel and councillors were then able to discuss the application of the council's policy with officers from the Council Tax, Housing and Adult Social Care Services. The panel concluded that:

- the council must develop a process at an appropriate point in the debt recovery process which enable the vulnerable to be identified
- the council must set in place opportunities to share information in order to identify more vulnerable residents.

The panel's recommendations were accepted by cabinet and further information regarding the processes to improve the debt recovery process will be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in the summer.

Chief Executive's Senior Management Restructure

During the year, the Chief Executive announced proposals to reduce the size of his senior management team. In order to contribute to the consultation on his plans, the Overview and Scrutiny established a challenge panel and met with the Chief Executive and the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development and Shared Services.

The panel was able to identify a number of issues with regard to the recruitment process, which favoured assimilation and ring fenced interviews to the new posts rather than going to the market to select staff. The panel felt that this would potentially impact unfavourably on the diversity of the board. The panel was also concerned that not selecting officers through a process of open competition might mean that the authority is not able to increase the skill base of the senior management team which is particularly important as the council develops as a 'commissioning' organisation.

The panel also highlighted concerns that the combination of the Section 151 and monitoring officer responsibilities into the post of Corporate Director of Resources, could mean that one of these statutory posts would not be represented on the Corporate Strategy Board.

The challenge panel report was included as apart of the overall consultation results and the Chief Executive welcomed the comments which were made by the panel.

The committee has also begun work on three other projects:

- **Private Rented Sector Housing** – to consider the quality and capacity of public sector housing in the borough
- **Customer Care** – to consider the customer journey through the council
- **Safeguarding children** – to consider how effectively local services are able to safeguard the wellbeing of young people in the borough.

These projects are at a very early stage in their development and more detail will be included in next year's annual report.

Our conclusions and next steps

We have again delivered a challenging work programme which we hope will help the council through these very difficult times. We hope that by bringing cross party, backbench challenge to the decisions which Cabinet are having to make we will help to ensure that the right choices are made and that the well being of our residents can be safeguarded.

However, we also recognise that our resources are limited and that rather than trying to cover all aspects of the council's business during our deliberations, we must focus on those issues of key importance to the authority and our residents. In this way we will maximise the contribution we can make to the council's performance. Next year's report will incorporate more information as to how we have focussed our activities.



Cllr Jerry Miles

Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Paul Osborn

Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee meetings	12
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	<p>Cllr O'Dell, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder (1)</p> <p>Cllr Mitzi Green, Children's Services Portfolio Holder (1)</p> <p>Cllr Brian Gate, Schools and Colleges Portfolio Holder (1)</p> <p>Cllr Graham Henson, Customer Services and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder (2)</p> <p>Cllr Thayya Idaikkadar, Property and Major Contracts Portfolio Holder (1)</p> <p>Cllr Bill Stephenson, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation (1)</p> <p>Cllr Davine, Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder (1)</p> <p>Cllr Perry Community and Cultural Services Portfolio Holder (1)</p>

Report from Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee

Our sub-committee

The Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee looks in detail at how the council's services are performing in-year.

We monitor service and financial performance by analysing data and then requesting briefings or details of action plans in place where necessary. The sub-committee can make recommendations for improvement and if necessary make referrals to the Overview and Scrutiny committee if further work is needed.

Our meetings

Our regular Chair and Vice-Chairman's briefings continue to drive the work programme of the sub-committee. Our main areas of activity in 2011/12 have been:

- **Budget holder forecasting compliance** – arising from concerns about compliance by budget holders in 2011/12, we have received regular updates on forecasting compliance by budget holders. We are pleased that there has been some improvement, but note that there are still some difficulties, for example where other systems are involved, such as Framework-i.
- **Revenue and capital monitoring** – the quarterly Revenue and Capital Monitoring report (also considered at Cabinet) is now a regular agenda item for the sub-committee. The challenging financial climate necessitates the sub-committee continuing to evaluate the council's response to these pressures.
- **Capital governance and monitoring** – following the overspend in the Children's Services capital programme in 2010/11 we have paid particular attention to capital governance and monitoring arrangements.
- **Payment to suppliers within 30 days** – this remains an area of interest for the sub-committee. In 2012/13 we will monitor the implementation of the recommendations arising from the internal audit review of contract procedure rules, which focused on purchase orders that were raised after the date of an invoice.
- **Cabinet decision making protocol** – following Cabinet's decision to adopt a protocol on which decisions should go to Cabinet and to amend the council's financial regulations, we considered potential implications for scrutiny.

- **Major contracts and procurement savings** – we received a report which provided an overarching view of how major procurement contracts in excess of £1m would be managed and provided a summary of procurement savings being achieved across the council. We have agreed with officers that the sub-committee will receive both a mid-year and a year-end report which will provide:
 - a brief overview of the council’s spend over the period, highlighting areas of opportunity for improvement,
 - the contracts register,
 - the delivery of procurement savings,
 - details of upcoming contracts,
 - a summary of all waivers to Council Contract Procedure Rules.

- **Access Harrow – customer service performance**
 At the request of the scrutiny review of the council’s use of performance information, we received a report on information on Access Harrow performance, details of popular service requests and levels of avoidable contact. This will help to inform the forthcoming scrutiny review of customer care.

- **Leisure management contract performance** – the relevant portfolio holders attended the sub-committee in February to discuss the performance of the contract. We have requested a further update on the both the performance and financial aspects of the contract.

- **Children looked after (CLA) – education and attendance**
 As Chair and Vice-Chairman we have had some concerns about performance in this area based on our consideration of the Corporate Scorecard. Along with the Children’s Scrutiny Lead Members and the Vice-Chairman of O&S we met with officers, including the new Virtual Headteacher for CLA, to discuss performance. We look forward to receiving details of the Virtual Headteacher’s action plan.

- **Project activity** – The Chair has been a member of both phases of the scrutiny review group of the council’s use of performance information. The Vice-Chairman is the chair of the standing scrutiny review of the budget.

- **Past reviews** – we have also monitored progress on past reviews, including:
 - Economic development strategy action plan (an update on work undertaken since the Sustainability Review was completed)
 - Measuring up: council’s use of performance information – phase 1
 - Better Deal for Residents’ review – interim report – project management

Next steps

This year has been productive for the sub-committee. The work of the scrutiny review of the use of performance information has certainly helped to raise the profile of the sub-committee and we look forward to recommendations from that review being implemented in 2012/13, thereby enabling us to take a timelier look at the service and financial performance of the council.



Councillor Sue Anderson
Chair, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub-Committee



Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane
Vice-Chairman, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Committee meetings	3
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	<p>Cllr David Perry, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services (1)</p> <p>Cllr Thaya Idaikkadar, Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts (1)</p>

Report from the Adult Health and Social Care Lead Members and Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Our sub-committee

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee is focussed on giving detailed consideration of health, social care and wellbeing issues key to Harrow residents on a local, London wide and national level. The council and key partners are in a position whereby there are a number of imminent changes being put in place and are soon to be implemented in the health and social care environment pending the passing of the Health and Social Care Bill. This has been much of the focus of the committee in 2011/12.

The role of the Adult Health and Social Care Scrutiny Lead members is to consider a range of important health and social care issues that affect Harrow both at committee level and also outside of the committee. We work closely with the Director for Community Health and Wellbeing, colleagues at NHS Harrow, North West London Hospitals and with other key providers of health and social care services in the borough.

Some of the work we carry out as leads is referred on to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee in order for formal consideration of key issues. This year has been extremely busy and there has been a great deal of cross over between our work as lead members and our work with fellow members on the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Proposed merger of Ealing Hospital Trust and North West London Hospitals

Over the course of this year we have spent a substantial amount of time looking at the proposed merger of Ealing Hospital Trust (EHT) and North West London Hospitals Trust (NWLHT). Discussions on the merger took place both in the formal committee setting and in extremely valuable informal joint meetings with fellow Councillors from Brent and Ealing. Colleagues from NWLHT and EHT also participated in the informal meetings with the three boroughs.

It is hoped that the potential merger will realise saving by replacing two Trust Boards with one, creating an opportunity to unify management, streamline work processes and simplify management structures and achieve Foundation Trust status. The merged organisation also aims to provide the clinical vision to deliver an integrated healthcare service through the Integrated Care Organisation and increased partnership with GPs and social care sector.

Consultation on the Outline Business Case (OBC) was conducted with Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) as there was no statutory obligation to consult with key bodies such as the scrutiny units in the affected boroughs. Nevertheless, we submitted our response to the proposals in February and these will be included in the Final Business Case (FBC) for the merger which will be published at the end of March 2012.

Although the benefits of a merged organisation are understood, we also reiterated some of our concerns in our submission which included the issue of accessibility and transport, how the changes will be conveyed and communicated to the public, the need to improve accessibility of community services as part of the plan to reduce hospital care. The impact of

the changes on A & E services and whether Northwick Park Hospital will be able to cope with the additional patients and whether the plans to improve access to GP services will actually be realised was also a key concern for the committee.

We also emphasised that joined up IT services will be essential for collaborative working between GP's, community services and hospitals. Maintaining a borough based focus especially in terms of the delivery of community services was also highlighted as key for the merged organisation. The need for an equalities impact assessment on the merger proposals which was absent from the OBC was also stressed in our submission.

The distinction of the merger as a management change without consideration of the possible service changes has been a key concern for the committee. In the public's view, a management merger immediately comes across as a service change. The committee will be keenly watching whether any of the proposals arising from current 'Shaping a Healthier Future' project being carried out by NHS NWL has any implications on the newly merged organisation.

NHS Harrow and North West London Hospitals Trust Budget Position

Historical debt, an aging population, an increase in emergency CARE, use of agency staff, increased demand due to chronic illness and in some instances double running costs has all lead to significant challenges on the budget position for NHS Harrow. The committee Looked at the budget and savings plans to manage the challenges at their meeting in September 2011.

The committee also considered the budget and savings position at second more focussed meeting in February 2012, where they took the opportunity to look at the implications of the budget and savings position of the commissioner (NHS Harrow) on the providers, NWLH and vice versa.

The committee will be keen to see how finances take shape over the coming year, especially as plans go forward and the Clinical Commissioning Group (led by GP consortia) take over the role of commissioning.

Review of Primary Care Urgent Care in Harrow

This year, the committee considered NHS Harrow's review of Primary Care Urgent Care in the borough which addressed the steps being taken by NHS Harrow to ensure that patients ARE able to access services appropriate to their clinical need. The review was also carried out to explore the reasons why patients used Primary Care Urgent Care services in the way they did. Following the review proposals for improving patient outcomes to make Primary Care Urgent Care services more efficient were developed. Amongst the findings from the review was that NHS Harrow was at times paying for the same service twice due to the way patients accessed services in the borough.

It was realised that the lack of accessibility to GP services was a reason why a large number of patients indicated that they used these urgent care services as their main source of non-urgent primary care. The review highlighted that some patients would benefit from continuity of care whilst others wanted to see a GP, any professional at a convenient time. As a result of the review, NHS Harrow set in motion plans to make access to urgent care consistent across the borough, expand Urgent Care Centres to reduce pressure on A&E, communicate the

message that walk-in centres, Urgent Care Centres and A&E should be for urgent cases only and improve access to GP's.

The committee will be looking to see if better 'signposting' has an impact on ensuring that patients are referred to and are accessing the most appropriate service and that GP access, which has been a challenge for a while improves. This is the key to ensuring that the right services are accessed for the right purposes. The committee will also be keen to review the impact of the changes in terms of the impact on budgets and what savings are achieved.

Temporary closure of Central Middlesex Hospital A&E

In relation to the review of Primary Care Urgent Care, in November 2011 we were surprised to hear of the temporary closure of Central Middlesex A&E between the hours of 8am and 7pm through a local paper. Having discussed it informally in our leads meeting, we decided it was important for the committee to get a full explanation on the reasons for the closure at a committee meeting.

We learnt that the temporary closure of the Central Middlesex Hospital A&E department followed the establishment of the GP led Urgent Care Centre at the hospital. The Urgent Care Centre absorbed approximately 70% of the workload for the A&E department and the department had also been run exclusively by agency staff at a rate of approximately two patients per hour. In addition to this it was reported that and middle grade staff had been increasingly difficult to recruit and retain.

An action plan was developed to manage the situation and advertisements for five new Consultants and a Clinical Director went out in February 2012. In addition, a recruitment drive had been initiated to tackle recruitment issues with middle grade staff. It will be important to consider the action plan and the impact of the closure in the coming months and explore how the plans for the NHS NWL cluster as a whole impact.

Review of Infant Mortality Rates in Harrow

The infant mortality rates in the borough were considered in the early part of the year in our capacity as lead members following concerns being raised about an increase in the rate. As an issue of significant importance, we took the issue to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Subcommittee.

The issue and potential causes were addressed at a committee meeting where the Director of Public Health outlined that there had been an increase in the number of infant deaths. It was explained that no single factor could be attributed as the main cause of the recent increase. The main national and local risk factors associated with infant mortality rates were known to be due to child poverty, overcrowding, late antenatal booking, low birth weight babies, reduced vaccination rates and difficulty accessing interpretation services.

Preventative action such as working to increase the uptake of antenatal care and work to looking at the provision and quality of housing in the borough was being put in place to address this issue. It will be important that this is reviewed in the new year this issue is reviewed.

Health Reforms Progress and Implementation

In our role as lead member we have also kept a close eye on the health reforms nationally and the progress of implementation in the borough in relation to health, social care and public health.

Subject to parliamentary approval, Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBB) will become a statutory committee of the authority by April 2013. The shadow HWBB in Harrow was established in September 2011 and is fully in operation and making progress. The relationship the committee has with this board will be very significant as we move forward in the future. The key output of the HWBB will be the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which the committee will be reviewing as it develops in the coming months.

The committee have also spent some time over the course of the year looking at Public Health and the progress in bringing it fully into the council and the Public Health Transition plan will be presented to the committee in July 2012.

Developments for the establishment of HealthWatch, which will take over from the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) from April 2013 has also been considered by the committee. Overseen by HealthWatch England and part of the Care Quality Commission, HealthWatch will be the local consumer champion across the health and social care sector. Given this important role, key relationships will need to be forged between HealthWatch and the committee.

The committee has also made some progress in developing key relations with the Clinical Commissioning Group and the chair of the board regularly attends the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Further steps to develop relationships with lead GP's and members of the Clinical Commissioning Group will be extremely important for the future.

'Shaping a Healthier Future' North West London, Commissioning Strategy Plan 2012-15

At the end of 2011 we became increasingly aware and engaged in the of the proposals for change in services delivery across the whole of the North West London cluster.

A high proportion of money is currently spent on hospitals as opposed to other parts of the health service and this needs to be redressed. The programme aims to tackle this by creating better primary and community services and developing a robust out of hospital model of care through joined up working with GP's, the community and Social Services whilst reducing the number of hospitals.

At the February committee meeting, the Director of Strategy for NHS NWL gave a presentation on 'Shaping a Healthier Future', the case for change for the programme that aimed to improve accessibility to primary care clinicians and promote well co-ordinated access to specialists, up-to-date facilities across NWL. A preferred options paper on the changes for NWL is anticipated to be available by April 2012. A 12 weeks public consultation on the proposal is also proposed to run from June till September 2012.

A Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) will be established to provide external scrutiny and enable the eight different boroughs within North West London the opportunity to shape the proposals of the programme and actively respond to the

consultation. The other authorities involved include Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Hounslow, Hillingdon and Westminster and at the committee meeting on 7 February, the committee agreed to take part in the JHOSC. It is planned that the first informal meeting of the JHOSC will be held at the end of March 2012.

Children's Safeguarding

In February 2012, the Corporate Director for Children and Families raised a number of concerns regarding progress on some of the recommendations that came out of the NHS London Safeguarding Children Improvement Team visit to the Harrow Health Community in October 2010.

As lead members we flagged up the concerns regarding progress on some of the recommendations that came out of the visit with fellow colleagues on the Scrutiny Leadership Group. It was decided that an urgent review to look at the safeguarding children's arrangements in the borough to ensure that they are sufficiently robust should be carried out. The review will focus on whether all the appropriate services, procedures and individuals are in place and whether there is reasonable assurance and confidence that children at risk of significant harm in Harrow are sufficiently safeguarded. The work is currently underway and is expected to report in the early part of the coming municipal year.

Adults Local Account

The Corporate Director for Community Health and Wellbeing presented a report to the committee in December which set out the Directorate's approach to Quality Assurance (QA) that has led to the development of a Local Account for adult social care.

To ensure the authority is listening and responding effectively to service users and using all of the feedback channels available Adult Services established the QA and Learning Board and produce a quality assurance report. The report provides an overview of the QA and learning activities undertaken across Adult Services.

The division is in the process of integrating the QA framework into the Adult's Service Plan 2011-14. Changes to the way social care services are monitored and inspected has meant that Adult Services review their own quality assurance measures and the Local Account is the way councils with adult social care responsibilities report to citizens and consumers about performance in Adult Services. We will be keenly monitoring progress of this and reviewing the Local Account in the year to come.

Adults Services Consultation

We kept a watching brief on the adult services consultation which ran from May –July 2011. The outcomes of the consultation were presented to Cabinet in October 2011 where the contribution policy was agreed. The Adults Services consultation was viewed as a success because customers/clients views had been genuinely sought and listened to and the equalities impact assessment was written by the actual service users in the voluntary sector. In the coming year the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee will review the implementation of the charging policy and its impact.

Personal Budgets and Re-ablement

Personal budgets are well established in Harrow and we have kept a watching brief on the progress through our meetings with the Director of Community Health and Wellbeing. At the end of 2011, progress was on track to reach the 50% target for personal budgets. The target for the cash element is 25% and this is proving more of a challenge. Further development of Shop 4 Support should greatly assist with this and we will be watching how this progresses in the new year. The department is also in the early stages of developing personal budgets for carers as well which may also prove to be successful.

The shop-4-support system is also proving extremely beneficial for re-ablement. The re-ablement programme has been running for over a year in the borough and a reported 85% of those that participate in the programme do not go on to access further services. How this will measure up against some of the challenges for the service such as the change in demographics will be interesting to see.

Other areas of work

This year the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee also considered the Harrow Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) Annual Report 2010/2011. We also received a progress update on a key review on the closure of Pinner Village Surgery carried out the year before. The Quality Account of key providers in Harrow including North West London Hospitals, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital and Central and North West London Foundation Trust were also scrutinised by the committee as will be done in the year to come.

Looking to the future

At a time of considerable change in the delivery and provision of health and social care services, keeping abreast of the emerging policies and service changes will be paramount. As detailed throughout the account of our work this year as lead members and also with the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee, there is a great deal of work that we will need to be done over the coming year to monitor progress and consider service development and changes. Our key focus will be on:

- 'Shaping a Healthier Future' North West London, Commissioning Strategy Plan 2012-15
- Children's Safeguarding
- Health Reforms Progress and Implantation
- Public Health transition

Statistics

Committee meetings	5
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	
Attendance by Partners	<p>Rob Larkman, Chief Executive NHS Harrow and Brent (2)</p> <p>Javina Sehgal, Borough Director, NHS Harrow (3)</p> <p>Dr Amol Kelshiker, Chair, Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group (3)</p> <p>David Astley, Interim Chief Executive, North West London Hospitals Trust (2)</p> <p>Peter Coles, Interim Chief Executive, North West London Hospitals Trust (2)</p> <p>David Cheesman, Director of Strategy, North West London Hospitals Trust (1)</p> <p>Simon Crawford, Senior Responsible Officer, Organisational Futures Programme (2)</p> <p>Professor Rory Shaw, Medical Director, North West London Hospitals Trust (2)</p> <p>Dr Alfa Sa'sdu, Medical Director, Ealing Hospital Trust (2)</p> <p>Dr Andrew Howe, Director of Public Health (1)</p>



Cllr Ann Gate
Chairman Health and Social Care Sub Committee



Cllr Vina Mithani
Vice-Chairman Health and Social Care Sub Committee

Reports from the Lead Members and the Scrutiny Leadership Group

Leadership Group

Since the election in 2010, the scrutiny leadership group, comprising the lead councillors and the chairs and vice chairs of the committees, has been meeting on a monthly basis to provide strategic direction for scrutiny. The group considers the timetabling of items for the committees and recommends the content of the work programme to the Overview and Scrutiny committee. It also provides a forum through which the scrutiny councillors can share issues which have been brought to their attention, to ensure nothing is missed and that there is no duplication of effort.

The group also provides a forum within which we can ensure that scrutiny is working as effectively as possible. One of the key issues considered this year has been the role and remit of the leads. During discussions a number of us have made the point that the breadth of our responsibilities is significant and that trying to cover all issues that fall within our remit is overwhelming and potentially meaning we are giving attention to those issues which don't require it and not looking in the kind of detail at the more important issues. In order to try to address this, we have decided that we will narrow the focus of our responsibilities but that we will do this based on evidence of performance of the council and our partners. We are therefore arranging detailed discussions with each of the corporate directors to discuss their service plans and their priorities. We have also requested information regarding the performance of each of our services and an analysis of the complaints they receive. In this way, we hope to be able to target our work. However, these are very challenging times and we will also keep an eye to the ever-changing policy horizon and we will leave space in our busy schedules to address any emerging issues.

As we enter the next administrative year, we may also choose to diversify the current lead areas, perhaps to reflect the changes introduced by the Chief Executive in his senior management reconfiguration.

The paragraphs below outline the work that each of the leads have undertaken during the last year.

Report from the Children's Leads

The role of the Children and Young People lead members is to consider issues which impact on the well-being of children across the borough. The shift in the policy environment since the change in national government in 2010 has brought with it much change in how children and young people are being served. Furthermore the impact of considerable cuts in public spending has led the council and its partners to take a thorough look at how they deliver services to children and young people. Our work over the last year has reflected upon much of this.

Our areas of focus

We have held regular meetings with the Corporate Director of Children's and Families to keep abreast of the issues affecting children and young people in Harrow and sought ways in which scrutiny can add value in continuing to meet their needs. Scrutiny's attention has also helped in the directorate's preparations for an Ofsted inspection in spring 2012.

- **Introduction of integrated targeted services for children and families**

In the last year we have seen the introduction of a new operating model for Children's Services. Staff, partners and service users have been involved in designing a new way of working for the directorate which is now named Children's and Families Services. The new look service provides a more effective and targeted children's services with a single point of access to services – it reduces bureaucracy, ensures a more appropriate service for vulnerable children and families, and delivers efficiencies. This transformational approach also sees the re-location of a number of services into one building, consolidating them from six different sites. It has therefore been a time of significant change for the directorate and we have monitored the progress of the changes.

- **Academies**

In August 2011 seven of Harrow's high schools transferred to academy status, thus becoming autonomous from local authority control. The council provided support to allow this conversion in status and in doing so lay down the groundwork for any subsequent transfers. The process of transfer and the lessons learned were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and we plan to monitor the impact of the changes over the coming year.

- **Safeguarding**

Early this year the Children's Access Team (CAT) and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) were introduced and bring together various partner services into one place to simplify access for residents and professionals. This was cited as best practice in Professor Eileen Munro's national review of child protection and we will make reference to this in scrutiny's current review of safeguarding.

- **Adoptions**

We were delighted last summer when Harrow's partnership with the charity Coram was cited as good practice in The Narey Report, a report by former Barnados Chief Executive Martin Narey into adoption services in the UK. In this, Harrow was singled out for praise for giving a greater role to the voluntary sector. The directorate has worked very hard in recent years around adoptions and the adoptions service has been transformed, making it one of the most effective adoption services in England.

- **Children Looked After**

We were concerned about the performance figures relating to the education and attendance of Children Looked After (CLA) which were persistently unsatisfactory. With a few of our scrutiny colleagues we held a briefing to examine the issues with council officers including the new virtual head for all children looked after by the council. This new post is a part-time role held by one person with the intention that the service operates like a school in its own right. The factor with the greatest impact on attendance is the stability of the care placement and having a Personal Education Plan in place is also important. These are monitored and reviewed regularly. We will continue to liaise closely with the Corporate Parenting Panel and review their quarterly reports to ensure performance in this area improves.

- **Engaging young people**

As detailed elsewhere in this report, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a light-touch review on engaging young people. We were both members of this project and worked with scrutiny colleagues, community representatives and young people from Harrow Youth Parliament to produce a report that aims to enhance the council's engagement and involvement with young people in issues that matter most to them.

Looking to the future

We are delighted that in the recent annual Ofsted performance assessment Harrow's Children's Services was assessed as performing outstandingly, making it one of the best children's services in the country. We hope that scrutiny's approach as a 'critical friend' over the next year will help to consolidate this position and make Harrow's services for children and young people even stronger. We intend to continue monitoring progress in rolling out the new operating model for Children's and Families Services, including how the proposed hub and spoke model of children's centres develops. We will support an in-depth look into areas of focus through the scrutiny review of safeguarding and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee intends to take a critical look at the first year's operation and performance of the new academies in Harrow.

The national policy environment for local government and services for children and young people continues to change, around for example the school capital system following the James review, the Special Educational Needs green paper, and child protection with the Munro review. We will keep abreast of how these and other national policy landscapes develop and ensure that Harrow is well prepared to implement changes so that the success and well-being Harrow's children and young people is assured.



Councillor Christine Bednell
Policy Lead
Children and Young people



Councillor Krishna James
Performance Lead
Children and young people

Report from the Corporate Effectiveness Leads

Our areas of focus

We have continued to meet on a regular basis with the Assistant Chief Executive and the interim Corporate Director of Finance, now the Corporate Director of Resources, and we would like to thank them for the information which they have been able to share with us. Their briefings have enabled us to keep a regular eye on a number of areas:

- the budgetary performance of the council;
- the changes to the performance management regime in the aftermath of the abolition of the Audit Commission and the national indicator set;
- human resources - a key issue given the significant changes facing the organisation; and
- customer care

However, the main focus of our work has been on the council's debt recovery process. We have become increasingly aware of difficulties being faced by some of our more vulnerable residents with regard to the council's debt management processes. We must point out from the beginning that we fully endorse the council's vigilance in the pursuit of those of our residents who choose not to meet their civic responsibilities and pay their taxes/bills - we depend on this income in order to deliver services to our citizens. However, a number of very distressing cases have been brought to our attention which we felt warranted further investigation to assess whether or not our processes are flawed.

We approached this issue by taking a look at the debt collection performance of similar boroughs, in particular, was there any evidence to suggest that perhaps our approach was too heavy handed? If so we would have expected to see a greater proportion of our cases progressing through to bailiff action. There was no evidence of this and it seems we are much on a par with our colleagues. However, this did not explain the very distressing cases coming to our attention, it seemed to us, that the council's 'one size fits all' approach to debt recovery was placing our most vulnerable residents at greater risk. We therefore decided to investigate what might be done to safeguard the small number of people whose circumstances and vulnerability mean that they are unable to pay their debts to the council.

Our challenge panel heard evidence from officers in Council Tax, Housing and Adult Care Services and we were also very grateful for the advice and comment received from Harrow Law Centre.

By considering a number of real case studies we were able to investigate the practice and we concluded that:

- the council must be able to identify vulnerable residents at an appropriate point in the debt recovery process - we must stop to assess whether or not the people we are pursuing for debt are experiencing specific issues which mean they are unable to pay their debts before we make decisions which could see their circumstances irrevocably damaged
- the council must set in place opportunities to share information - it is clear to us, that information with regard to individual's particular circumstances is available in different parts of the council and we must find a way of sharing this.

We also considered whether or not there is scope to 'centralise' the various debt recovery functions however, we did not receive sufficient evidence on this point and we therefore propose to return to this next year.

Looking to the future

Like the other leads, we will be meeting with corporate directors early in the new municipal year to discuss their priorities and to focus our own activities. However we have already agreed that our immediate focus will be on:

- Centralisation of debt recovery processes – as further evidence is made available
- The implementation of the mobile and flexible working project which should go live in the next few months and
- The use of data generated via Access Harrow



Cllr Jerry Miles
Policy Lead
Corporate Effectiveness



Cllr Tony Ferrari
Performance Lead
Corporate Effectiveness

Report from the Safer and Stronger Communities Leads

Our areas of focus

In the early part of this year, we considered the **Strategic Assessment** – this document provides the statistical information upon which the borough's Community Safety Plan is based. We were pleased to have been able to consider this document, and we noted that a number of the items included as priorities for the borough, could also be picked up by the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) and the Neighbourhood Champions.

In this context we welcomed the results of **the Metropolitan Police Service's review of the SNTs** which was undertaken during 2011. We had been briefed on the likely changes to the SNTs during the year and had been able to register our concerns with the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Dal Babu. In July, the Metropolitan Police Service announced the results of the review:

- 'The Metropolitan Police Service remains firmly committed to dedicated Safer Neighbourhoods teams working to political ward boundaries
- Safer Neighbourhoods teams will work jointly across wards, on a temporary basis, to meet community and crime priorities
- The MPS will not reduce the number of PCs and PCSOs within Safer Neighbourhoods teams as a result of this review
- However, we will reduce management costs. There will be a reduction of 150 Safer Neighbourhoods Sergeants on a pro-rata basis across all boroughs'.

We also considered the **Adults Services consultation** with a view to understanding how the best practice derived from this exercise could be shared across the organisation. Officers had consulted with service users on a number of changes/reductions to the services they receive as a part of the council's need to make significant financial savings. The consultation had been a remarkable exercise and, whilst service users were not happy about the savings that needed to be made, they at least understood why they needed to be made and were also able to influence the changes. We were keen to ensure that this excellent practice is shared across the organisation, particularly in the context of the Birmingham Judgement. We were pleased to hear that Adults' Services had been given the time to undertake this challenging consultation process effectively, and in the process ensure that service users fully understood the issues.

We were pleased to have been briefed by officers on the **civil unrest** which took place across London and other parts of the country. In particular we wished to understand why the rioting which rocked the capital, did not materialise in Harrow. We are very grateful to Chief Inspector Nick Davies, Finlay Flett, Head of Community Safety Services and Mike Howes, Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships for attending our briefing in September and informing us of the actions taken by the council, the police and the community which kept our citizens safe. The council was able to contribute evidence of the partnership effort which had prevented disturbances from occurring in Harrow to the Riots Communities and Victims Panel report '5 Days in August'

Looking to the Future

Like other scrutiny lead councillors, we will meet with relevant officers to discuss their service plans with them in order to identify priorities, however, there are a number of issues which we have already identified for consideration in the next municipal year:

- Maintaining the positive cohesion of our diverse community
- The future relationship between the council and the police, for example in progressing plans for co-location;
- The impact of the Olympics on policing in Harrow
- Smartwater
- The changes following the abolition of the Metropolitan Police Authority and the introduction of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime;
- The performance information which is produced by the police service and how this might be used by other agencies to support the commissioning function.
- How the changes to housing benefit are impacting on our community.



Cllr Chris Mote

Policy Lead

Safer and Stronger Communities



Cllr Nana Asante

Performance Lead

Safer and Stronger Communities

Report from the Sustainable Development and Enterprise Leads

2011/12 has seen further national policy development in the field of sustainable development and enterprise including the draft National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act (specifically neighbourhood planning) and a new national housing strategy for England, *Laying the Foundations*. As in 2010/11 we have found our brief to be very wide ranging, cutting across the responsibilities of different directorates.

Broadly speaking we define *sustainable development* as that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. We consider *enterprise* to be business activity within an economic development and/or regeneration context.

Our areas of focus

Given our broad brief, over the last twelve months we have recognised the need to keep ourselves well informed about our policy area. Our activities have included:

- Attending an LGA seminar on localism and neighbourhood plans
- Attending an LGA conference 'Making the Green Deal a Fair Deal'
- Attending a conference on climate change at City Hall
- Attending a solar panel presentation held at the council
- Visiting local affordable housing provision at Honeypot Lane, Rayners Lane and Richards Close
- Visiting a local eco home in Tintagel Drive

We have also received briefings from council officers on the following areas:

- The Place Shaping directorate service plan, attended by the relevant portfolio holders and divisional management team
- The Carbon Reduction Commitment
- Housing policy
- The new housing repairs contract
- Property and disposal, attended by the relevant portfolio holder
- Mobile and flexible working, attended by the relevant portfolio holders

• Place Shaping Directorate Service Plan 2011/14

The Corporate Director outlined the major areas of focus for the directorate, which include:

- The Local Development Framework Core Strategy
- The Economic Development Action Plan and associated successful bids to the Mayor's Outer London Fund
- The council's disposals programme
- The mobile and flexible working project

• Carbon reduction commitment (CRC)

This briefing covered CRC in schools as well as the Draft Corporate Carbon Reduction Strategy. Targets in this area are challenging; the council's target for carbon reduction is an average of 4% per annum, in keeping with the Mayor's target of a 60% reduction by 2025.

- **Housing policy**

The briefing covered housing needs, voids and allocations, affordable housing, flexible tenancies and resident engagement. At this meeting the Divisional Director proposed that scrutiny could support the work of the directorate by considering the council's future relationship with private landlords and the associated policy impact. This project has been included in the work programme and we will be participating as Members of the review group.

- **The new housing repairs contract**

In 2007, the Council signed two 5-year contracts with Kier for construction works, one of which related to repairs and maintenance for both corporate and housing properties, running until the end of June 2012. We were briefed on options for the future and supported the preferred option, to contract with a small number of local suppliers. This approach should achieve significant savings as well as economic benefits to the local community by using local suppliers. We have recommended that the Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee monitor progress.

- **Property and disposal**

This briefing covered the Place Shaping Capital Programme 2011/12 to 2015/16. We discussed aspects of the programme with the Portfolio Holder, including the Civic Centre consolidation, Civic Centre site development, land acquisition and disposals strategy.

- **Mobile and flexible working**

This briefing covered plans for the implementation of the project. The project includes improving customer experience, improving the working life and performance of staff, replacing paper with electronic documents, rationalising use of office space and delivering efficiency savings.

Looking to the future

In 2011/12 we have sought to develop our knowledge and in the coming year we hope to prioritise our efforts in supporting and challenging the council's work in this area. In 2012/13 we will continue to encourage the council to consider all facets of sustainable development and enterprise. We will continue to monitor the impact of policy changes as well as major local developments such as the mobile and flexible working project.



Councillor Stephen Wright
Policy Lead
Sustainable Development and Enterprise



Councillor Sue Anderson
Performance Lead
Sustainable Development and Enterprise

Member development

This year's scrutiny member development programme has built upon the training and induction for scrutiny members last year and was agreed by the Scrutiny Leadership Group in June.

The aims and objectives for the programme addressed the following six areas:

- **Expertise:** To develop sufficient expertise and technical knowledge to deliver effective challenge.
- **Roles:** To consolidate the scrutiny arrangements and clarify the understanding of roles within them in order to champion the scrutiny function effectively.
- **Influence:** To assert scrutiny's influencing role by targeting recommendations.
- **Relationships:** To build relationships both externally with partner organisations and internally with officers and the Executive.
- **Evidence gathering and analysis:** To use evidence in the best way to inform constructive challenge and recommendations for future action.
- **Project planning:** To ensure that scrutiny projects are well-scoped and managed in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

In aligning scrutiny's training with the corporate member development programme, the Member Development Panel asked that sessions for scrutiny members be opened out to the rest of the member core and that the programme be incorporated into the corporate member development programme.

Social media – June 2011

Scrutiny members had also requested a session on social media which was delivered corporately. This should prove timely given scrutiny's extended use of social media to reach further into the community.

Community involvement and community leadership – October 2011

Request by members to follow up the session on consultation in March 2011, this session explored councillors' role in community leadership and issues that need to be considered with regard to community involvement. The session was delivered in house and was well received by councillors.

Being a scrutiny lead member – November 2011

To support scrutiny lead members, a session specifically exploring the expectations, skills and knowledge attached to these roles. This session was also delivered in house and received very good feedback from attendees. Their interactive delivery proved an engaging way for officers to deliver the training.

Project management – April 2012

This session is to be run by OPM for all councillors and explore issues around the different stages and processes involved in a well-run project and the different roles and skills required. It will also allow councillors to consider particular factors concerned with projects in a political environment.

Shifting relationships – date to be arranged

Given the level of changes in public services and the changing policy landscape within which these sit, relationships that the council and councillors have with other public sector bodies are changing. This training session will seek to explore the challenges around this, and consider specific implications of commissioning and transformation, and scrutiny's role in this.

Report from the Call-In Sub Committee

On 5th December, the Call In Sub Committee met to consider the decision made by Cabinet with regard to the Whitchurch Pavilion and Playing Fields taken on 17 November 2011 that:

- (1) having considered the findings of this report and, in accordance with officer recommendations, the Whitchurch Consortium be selected as the Council's preferred bidder for the purposes of further consultation as set out below;
- (2) the Corporate Director Place Shaping be authorised to:
 - I. consult Ward Councillors on the proposals put forward by the Whitchurch Consortium;
 - II. agree arrangements for the Whitchurch Consortium to present their proposed development plans in a public forum;
 - III. place statutory advertisements required in connection with the proposed leasing of the open space land and to consider and respond to any representations received as a result of the above actions;
 - IV. negotiate the Development Agreement, associated Service Level Agreement and Terms of the Lease;
- (3) note that the consultation results will be reported to Cabinet in due course prior to any final decision and that, in any event, no development shall take place unless and until the Whitchurch Consortium have obtained planning permission.'

The decision had been called in by the Abchurch Residents Association and other residents and ward councillors for Belmont, Canons and Stanmore Park wards.

The call in was made on the grounds that:

- Inadequate consultation took place prior to the decision being made; and
- There was an absence of adequate evidence upon which to base a decision

The sub committee resolved (majority):

That the challenge to the decision be taken no further and the decision be implemented.

On 28th February, the Call In Sub Committee met to consider the decision made by Cabinet with regard to the Transformation Programme Mobile and Flexible Working project taken on 9th February that:

- (1) the implementation of the Mobile and Flexible Working project, as set out in the report, be approved.
- (2) the Corporate Director Place Shaping, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation and the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, be authorised to take all actions necessary to implement the project.

The call in was made on the grounds that:

- Inadequate consultation took place prior to the decision being made; and
- There was an absence of adequate evidence upon which to base a decision

The decision had been called in by Councillors Christine Bednell, Stephen Greek, Barry Macleod-Cullinane, Chris Mote, John Nickolay, Joyce Nickolay and Simon Williams.

The sub committee resolved that:

- (1) (unanimously) the call-in on ground (a) – inadequate consultation with stakeholders prior to the decision - be upheld and referred back to Cabinet for re-consideration as Members felt let down by officers because when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members requested a briefing on an item before Cabinet, they would expect to have received it before the Cabinet meeting took place.
- (2) the call-in on ground (b) - the absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision – not be upheld due to insufficient grounds.



Cllr Jerry Miles
Chairman Call-In Sub Committee



Cllr Paul Osborn
Vice Chairman Call-In Sub Committee

Conclusion

The next municipal year will continue to present significant challenges to the authority. The council and partners will face further, unprecedented reductions in our finances, our communities will continue to experience the rigours of recession and central government will continue to unveil their emerging policy programme. All of this creates a volatile context for the delivery of services to the people of the borough. The resources available to scrutiny are small and it is absolutely crucial that these resources are targeted where they can be of most benefit to the authority and to our residents. We will continue to champion the needs and well being of our residents.

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date:	3 rd April 2012
Subject:	Standing Review of the Budget – Quarterly Report
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Cllr Jerry Miles, Policy Lead Member, Corporate Effectiveness Cllr Tony Ferrari, Performance Lead Member, Corporate Effectiveness
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report updates the Overview and Scrutiny committee on the work which has been undertaken by the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget

Recommendations:

Councillors are recommended to:

- i. Consider and comment on the work of the standing the review of the budget

Section 2 – Report

This is the first progress report from the Standing Review of the Budget.

The review was established at the end of 2011 and has met five times.

The purpose of the review is to consider the long term, strategic financial performance of the council and to offer advice with regard to evolving local government financial policy. In this regard, the group has identified a number of key strategic issues which it wishes to consider:

- Management and strategic use of the council's capital budget
- Self financing of the Housing Revenue Account
- Implications of the Business Rate Retention Scheme
- Management of major contract renewal
- Implications of the localisation of Council Tax Benefit

The initial focus of the group has been on the management and strategic use of capital and self financing arrangements for the Housing Revenue Account.

Management and Strategic Use of Capital

The review group considers that the capital budget has not in recent years been considered with the same rigour in terms of management as the revenue budget. It has noted with some concern that until recently there was little attention paid to the allocation of capital resources and the longer term implications of capital spend. As such, the group has raised a number of issues with the Interim Corporate Director of Finance and has been reassured with regard to her more vigilant approach to the allocation and management of capital resources, in particular via the capital forum.

The group has also decided to consider how the council uses capital funds to deliver its strategic objectives and has agreed to undertake a specific piece of work in this regard. Over the coming months, members of the review group will visit a number of other local authorities (including Newham, Hackney and Wandsworth) to discuss with them how they have used capital funding to support the overall regeneration of their boroughs. This information will then be discussed with council officers to consider what Harrow might learn from other authorities' experience and practice.

A specific report covering the review group's consideration of capital management and use will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny committee and Cabinet in the summer or early autumn.

Housing Revenue Account Self Financing

In March 2012, housing debt and responsibility for all social housing revenue transferred to local authorities. This is a major achievement reflecting cross-party consensus on the need for change in the HRA system going back to when the problem of the HRA's "negative subsidy" was formally identified by Nick Raynsford, the then local government minister, in Parliament in summer 1997. After years of extensive lobbying on behalf of local authorities, change is finally happening.

The HRA subsidy system saw all social housing properties assessed as to their "housing need", i.e. the level of maintenance and investment required to bring them up to standard, with a transfer from those authorities with lower needs to those authorities with higher needs. Over time, more and more authorities became "negative subsidy" boroughs, transferring a growing proportion of their tenants' rent money to other parts of the country. Harrow has long been a "negative subsidy" borough; it loses approximately £7m or 25% of its collected rents to other authorities. Further, some 20% of the subsidy collected is not transferred to other authorities to improve housing stock by is retained, instead, by the Treasury. The amount collected by the Treasury has been steadily rising.

The reform of the HRA involves authorities "buying themselves out of the system" by taking on a share of the historic public housing debt. The changes mean that effectively a housing authority will become a business – it will own its property and will retain all revenue generated by this property base. (However, there is concern over Right to Buy receipts and other capital disposals as Treasury is demanding some share of these; local government is lobbying for all receipts to be retained locally otherwise it means a tax or charge by Treasury on tenants' rents will continue.) In order to do this, all local authorities are required to 'buy back' their housing debt from the Treasury funded through a loan from the Public Work Loans Board – for Harrow this means a payment of £89m to be paid back over a 50-year period. (This £89m is in addition to the current HRA debt of £60m+.)

The group is concerned about the longevity of this debt and whilst being generally reassured with regard to the policy change, wishes to investigate whether the option of a 50-year loan represents the best deal for the authority and for tenants and residents. With this in mind, and in light of the fact that Harrow has one of the lowest social housing stocks in London, the group is approaching a number of other authorities who have divested their social housing stock to investigate whether this is a potential option for the council.

The group also wishes to consider the policy proposals which underpin the council's approach to self financing – the 30-year housing strategy, the rent strategy and the scenario modelling through which the decision to take the 50-year loan has been decided upon – to consider whether the decisions taken now are sustainable over the longer term.

Consideration of these issues will take place during May/June and a formal report outlining the group's findings in this regard will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny committee and Cabinet in the summer for consideration alongside the 30-year housing strategy.

Other reports and workstreams

Further reports on the other issues included in the review's programme of work will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny committee and Cabinet in subsequent quarterly reports.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Performance Issues

There are no specific performance issues associated with this report but it is anticipated that subsequent reports, detailing recommendations with regard to capital management and HRA self financing will support the council's financial performance.

Environmental Impact

There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

Equalities implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

Corporate Priorities

All

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background

Papers

Contact:

Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 8420 9387

Background Papers:

None

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date:	3 April 2012
Subject:	Customer Care Scrutiny Review – Scope
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Corporate Effectiveness – Councillor Jerry Miles and Councillor Tony Ferrari
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Scope for the Customer Care Scrutiny Review

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the scope for the Customer Care Scrutiny Review, as discussed by the review group on 29 February 2012.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

1. Consider and approve the scope for the scrutiny review

Section 2 – Report

The need for scrutiny to look into customer care has emerged through a number of different scrutiny reviews (e.g. Better Deal for Residents, Budget, and Performance Management reviews) which have all flagged up issues around how the council deals with residents' concerns. Rather than address these in a piecemeal fashion, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2011 agreed to commission a review exploring the customer's journey through Harrow Council.

A scoping meeting of the review group was held on 29 February 2012 where it was agreed that Councillor Paul Osborn would be the Chairman for the review. The review group discussed the key issues that the review should cover and the appropriate methodologies through which to explore these. The group also discussed the review's aim, measures of success. These are all reflected in the attached draft scope.

The main objectives of this project will be to:

- To gain a picture of Harrow Council's customer care.
- To be in a position to congratulate those parts of the council that address customers' concerns well.
- To help those parts of the council that do not address customers' concerns well to correct failings by making suggestions as to how the council can improve its customer care.
- To ensure that Harrow's customer care systems and culture are as good as they can be.

It is expected that the review will take place over Spring/Summer 2012 with a view to reporting back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2012.

Financial Implications

The costs of delivering this project will be met from within existing resources.

Performance Issues

There are no performance issues specifically associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

There is no specific environmental impact associated to this report.

Risk Management Implications

There are none specific to this report.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? Yes () No ()

The report outlines the scope for the Customer Care Scrutiny Review and as such does not make any proposals to alter services or how they are delivered.

The council's customer care impacts upon everyone who makes contact with the council. Given the nature of the services that the council provides, it has particular implications for some of the most vulnerable members of the community, as well as more broadly all residents.

As included in the scope, the review will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.

In carrying out the review, the review group will also need to consider its own practices and how it can facilitate all relevant stakeholders in the borough to have their voices heard.

Corporate Priorities

This review could potentially contribute to the delivery of all the corporate priorities:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe
- United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need
- Supporting our Town Centre, our local shopping centres and businesses

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Nahreen Matlib, Senior Professional Scrutiny, 020 8420 9204

Background Papers: Appendix A: Scope for Customer Care Scrutiny Review

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MARCH 2012

CUSTOMER CARE SCRUTINY REVIEW - DRAFT SCOPE

1	SUBJECT	Customer Care Scrutiny Review
2	COMMITTEE	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
3	REVIEW GROUP	<p>Councillors: Councillor Nana Asante Councillor Camilla Bath Councillor James Bond Councillor Krishna James Councillor Jean Lammiman Councillor Jerry Miles Councillor Chris Mote Councillor Paul Osborn (Chairman) Councillor Stephen Wright</p> <p>Co-optees: To be recruited from the Pool of Advisors</p>
4	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain a picture of Harrow Council’s customer care. • To be in a position to congratulate those parts of the council that address customers’ concerns well. • To help those parts of the council that do not address customers’ concerns well to correct failings by making suggestions as to how the council can improve its customer care. • To ensure that Harrow’s customer care systems and culture are as good as they can be.
5	MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer satisfaction with how the council deals with customers’ queries so that the customer experience is better as a result of the scrutiny review’s recommendations.
6	SCOPE	At this stage, no areas of scope are to be excluded as all contacts with the council are regarded relevant. As the review progresses in gathering evidence, the review group will refine its focus as appropriate.
7	SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)	<p>This review relates to all four of the Corporate Priorities 2011/12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe • United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and protecting people who are most in need • Supporting our Town Centre, our local shopping centres and businesses
8	REVIEW SPONSOR	Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
9	ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER	Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny
10	SUPPORT OFFICER	Nahreen Matlib, Senior Professional Scrutiny
11	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	Scrutiny Team
12	EXTERNAL INPUT	<p>Input from the following may be gauged through the course of the review:</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members • Residents and members of the public • Frontline staff involved in delivering customer care on behalf of Harrow Council • Relevant corporate director(s) and service director(s) • Relevant portfolio holder <p>Experts/advisers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Public Scrutiny • Public policy think tanks • Other local authorities
13	METHODOLOGY	<p>Light touch review using;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings from senior managers about local context • Analysis of Access Harrow performance and mystery shopping data • Random screening of recorded calls • Customer journey mapping • Intelligence from members' caseloads and members' complaints system • Benchmarking information from other local authorities and/or the private sector to identify good practice • Visits to leading local authorities in the field and/or private sector companies to share learning • Use press media and social media platforms to gather residents' views and experiences • Surveys of the Residents Panel (questionnaire or focus group) to get wider residents' perspective • Desktop research on previous studies of council customer care e.g. other scrutiny reviews
14	EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	The council's customer care impacts upon everyone who makes contact with the council. Given the nature of the services that the council provides, it has particular implications for some of the most vulnerable members of the community, as well as more broadly all residents.

		<p>The review will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.</p> <p>In carrying out the review, the review group will also need to consider its own practices and how it can facilitate all relevant stakeholders in the borough to have their voices heard.</p>
15	ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS	<p>The review will require a long-term commitment from members and officers. Success will depend upon the ability and willingness of officers, partners and stakeholders (as relevant) to participate and contribute fully in this review.</p> <p>Recognition of the current financial context for local authorities and the public sector as a whole should also be considered as part of the review.</p>
16	SECTION 17 IMPLICATIONS	The review will have regard to the possible community safety implications of any recommended changes to policy or practice.
17	TIMESCALE	Evidence gathering in Spring/Summer 2012 with a view to reporting back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2012.
18	RESOURCE COMMITMENTS	To be met from existing scrutiny budget. No significant additional expenditure is anticipated.
19	REPORT AUTHOR	Nahreen Matlib, as advised by the review group.
20	REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	<p>Outline of formal reporting process:</p> <p>To Service/Corporate Director [✓] throughout the course of the review and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To Portfolio Holder [✓] as a witness in the review and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To CSB [✓] To be confirmed</p> <p>To O&S [✓] 24 October 2012</p> <p>To Cabinet [✓] To be confirmed</p>
21	FOLLOW UP ARRANGEMENTS (proposals)	Review by the Performance and Finance Sub-committee 6 months after the final report has been considered by Cabinet.

Version history:

1. 1 March 2012 – following scoping meeting on 29 February
2. 21 March 2012 – following comments from officers and councillors on draft scope

Contact:

Nahreen Matlib, Senior Professional Scrutiny, nahreen.matlib@harrow.gov.uk, 020 8420 9204

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**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date:	3 April 2012
Subject:	Scrutiny Lead Member Report
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	All
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The report accompanies the reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to consider the reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members and agree the actions proposed therein.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

This report outlines details of the work of the Scrutiny Lead Members for Corporate Effectiveness, Safer and Stronger Communities and Sustainable Development and Enterprise.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report

Performance Issues

There are no performance issues associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

There is no environmental impact associated with this report

Risk Management Implications

There are no risks associated with this report.

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

This report outlines the activities of the scrutiny lead councillors; it makes no proposals to change service delivery.

Corporate Priorities

The Scrutiny Lead Members' responsibilities cover all areas of the council's activity.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background

Papers

Contact: Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 8420 9387, lynne.margetts@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT:
CORPORATE EFFECTIVENESS

NOTE OF THE SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER BRIEFING
7TH MARCH 2012

Lead Members: Councillors Jerry Miles and Tony Ferrari

Attendees

- Cllr Jerry Miles, Corporate Effectiveness Policy Lead
- Cllr Tony Ferrari, Corporate Effectiveness Performance Lead
- Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

The Corporate Effectiveness Leads met to prepare for the presentation of the Debt Recovery review, included on the Cabinet agenda for 8th March. Cllr Ferrari enquired as to what progress had been made with regard to the potential centralisation of all debt recovery processes.

They agreed to invite Director of Corporate Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive to their next meeting to discuss the Corporate Resources service plan and thus to identify priorities for their consideration in the next municipal year. They also proposed to consider the following:

Implementation of the Mobile and Flexible Working project

Use of customer information gathered via Access Harrow.

For Action

Lynne to speak to Director of Corporate Resources to ascertain progress thus far on the debt recovery centralisation project

Lynne to invite Director of Corporate Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive to the next meeting of the Corporate Effectiveness Leads.

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT:
SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

NOTE OF THE SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER BRIEFING
20TH MARCH 2012

Lead Members: Councillors Nana Asante and Chris Mote

Attendees

Cllr Chris Mote, Safer and Stronger Communities Policy Lead

Cllr Nana Asante, Safer and Stronger Communities Performance Lead

Lynne Margetts, Service Manager scrutiny

The Safer and Stronger Communities leads met to consider their priorities for the coming municipal year. Whilst officers from the Council and from the Police Service will be invited to discuss their service plans and priorities, the leads considered some of the specifics which had been identified in the scrutiny annual report.

The following priorities have been identified:

- Maintaining the positive cohesion of our diverse community
- The future relationship between the council and the police, for example in progressing plans for co-location;
- The impact of the Olympics on policing in Harrow – in particular, in the context of increased incidents of domestic burglaries, what will be done to maintain community stability
- Smartwater
- The changes following the abolition of the Metropolitan Police Authority and the introduction of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime;
- The performance information which is produced by the police service and how this might be used by other agencies to support the commissioning function.
- How the changes to housing benefit are impacting on our community.

The leads will invite the Borough Commander and the Head of Community Safety to attend their next meeting to consider policing and the Olympics, Smartwater and the implications of the establishment of the Mayor's Office for Policing.

In identifying the priorities to be considered, further statistical information with regard to hate crimes will be sought.

For Action

Lynne to invite Borough Commander and Head of Community Safety to the next leads meeting on 17th April.

Lynne to identify additional statistical information.

The Leads noted that the Community Safety Plan and the Safer Harrow Strategic Assessment will both be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee on 12th June.

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER REPORT
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE

NOTE OF THE SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER BRIEFING
22 FEBRUARY 2012

Lead Members: Councillors Anderson and Wright

PLACE SHAPING BRIEFING – MOBILE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

Attendees

- Councillor Sue Anderson, Scrutiny Performance Lead, SDE
- Councillor Stephen Wright, Scrutiny Policy Lead, SDE
- Councillor Paul Osborn, Vice-Chair, O&S
- Councillor Graham Henson, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder
- Councillor Bill Phillips, Portfolio Holder Assistant, Information Technology
- Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director, Place Shaping
- Carol Cutler, Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation
- Andy Parsons, Head of Service, Business Management
- Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer

NOTES

The Head of Service began by introducing the objectives of the mobile and flexible working programme. Members were reminded of the video that had been produced to introduce the concept of the project.

The approach has been piloted through the HARP projects, which provided remote access to core applications. The new project has a number of benefits including online presence management, secure remote access and document management capability.

As the business case had been developed some time ago the first task will be to revisit the technical solution. This would include the impact of the ITO (IT externalisation), along with re-assessment of the market place and other developments. The review of the business case will be undertaken before implementation.

The underpinning principle for the project was that the council would adopt tried and tested solutions. As such the experience of other authorities in adopting such an approach was considered as part of the development of the project. Another principle is the need to ensure that risks regarding information security are kept low.

With regard to savings, Members were advised that about 33% of savings to be achieved would be cashable; there were decisions to be made regarding whether savings achieved in particular services were cashed or alternatively invested in service delivery.

The level of efficiencies achieved was also dependent on the starting point of the individual service; services such as HR which already operate a paperless workflow would make lesser gains than those that had not already taken such steps to modernise. Some areas such as Legal Services already have electronic document management; in other areas the cost of adopting such an approach would be need to be weighed against benefits. In Children's Services, for example, case work documents would be excluded from Sharepoint as Framework-I is already accessible remotely through Citrix.

The Trades Unions are keen to modernise business processes, recognising the advantages to staff in better managing work and personal time, as well as motivational gains. A Member commented that Unions tended to view the changes as voluntary, so enquired as to the strategy for implementation. The Corporate Director responded that staff would be expected to embrace the technological and systems changes; the Divisional Director added that in her experience staff wanted to make the change, and eventually working in such a way would be an element of the Council's approach to recruitment and retention.

From the perspective of reducing the Council's (non schools) salary expenditure, it was anticipated that there would be a 1% saving, equating to 30-35 full time equivalents (FTEs). The project would increase staff productivity rather than reducing staff count overall. Other advantages included opportunities for service redesign.

The wider context is that the Council has already closed most of its peripheral offices. The goal is to work towards a ratio of 5 desks to 10 staff. In the context of community budgets, this will offer the Council the opportunity to rent desk space to partners.

A Member asked whether Councillors' requirements had been included and was advised that additional work was required and that other transformation projects would be addressing this. The Member added that areas that needed to be considered included wi-fi for committee rooms; as the providing of tablets was a political issue all Members should be engaged at an early stage. The Corporate Director responded that the mobile and flexible working project will provide a technological platform for future initiatives.

Members discussed the financial summary information provided. The savings did not include savings from property rationalisation. A Member expressed concern about the achievability of the cashable savings. The Corporate Director responded that the Cabinet report addressed this and set out targets for the project within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS); some service areas were likely to achieve more while others might achieve less.

A Member enquired whether there would be costs associated with staff working from home. The Divisional Director responded that contracts did not specify that staff worked from home and that the cost of equipment was included in the project. Citrix or BeCrypt software would also enable staff to use their own equipment. The Portfolio Holder added that the project enables remote working, not just home working. The Divisional Director commented that, in Access Harrow for example, there is a bulge of calls between 9-10am, and while it would not make sense for staff to come into work for an hour, some staff might consider working if they could do so from home, thereby improving customer experience.

A Member asked why the report had gone to Cabinet if there was a need to review the full business case. The Corporate Director responded that a strategic decision from Cabinet was required in order to progress the project; any materially significant changes would be reported to Cabinet. When agreement is achieved, Capita will review the impact of the ITO on the project as well as technical advances and changing business needs since the FBC was finalised. This should achieve the best balance between tried and tested model and future proofing. A prudent approach had been proposed for the roll-out, so that lessons learned could be applied.

Next steps

The Vice-Chair of O&S requested that scrutiny be provided with the revised full business case along with the implementation plan. He also requested that status updates on the project be provided to Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee.

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**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date:	3 rd April 2012
Subject:	Work Programme Update Report
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	All
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee with information regarding progress on the projects currently included in the scrutiny work programme and also identifies emerging projects.

Recommendations:

Councillors are asked to:

- i. Note progress on the delivery of current scrutiny projects
- ii. Agree to the inclusion of the challenge panel on the implementation of review of staff terms and conditions

Section 2 – Report

The Overview and Scrutiny committee has commissioned a range of projects and this report provides the committee with an update on progress in the delivery of these projects.

Update reports from the Standing Review of the Budget and the Standing Review of the Better Deal for Residents are included elsewhere on the agenda for this evening's meeting.

Projects covered in this report are:

- Debt Recovery
- Engaging Young People
- Customer Care
- Private Rented Sector Housing
- Safeguarding Children
- Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee – NHS NW London Commissioning Strategy

Debt Recovery

This project has now been completed and a response has been received from Cabinet which accepted all of the recommendations. One of the issues which emerged from the review was the potential efficiencies to be delivered if all debt recovery functions across the council were to be centralised. Unfortunately, insufficient evidence from which to draw any objective conclusions on this issue was available to the panel. It has since emerged that officers from within the finance service are investigating the potential for central oversight of the functions and as such, the chairman of the Debt Recovery challenge panel has decided to reconvene the panel once the results of the finance service's investigation are complete. Further updates on this will be provided as the results of the investigation become available.

Engaging young people

This project, investigating the effectiveness of the council's engagement with young people, has completed its evidence gathering and a final report is now being prepared. It is anticipated that the report will be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting on 30th May.

Customer Care

This project has just started and will be considering the customer journey through the organisation. The chair of the review is Councillor Paul Osborn and the scope for the project is included elsewhere on this evening's agenda.

Private Rented Sector Housing

This project has begun its evidence gathering and will consider the development of the new Private Rented Sector Housing Strategy, in the context of national policy changes, the council's enforcement role and actions that can be taken to encourage improved standards in the sector.

A final report from the review is expected to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June 2012.

Safeguarding Children

This project was requested by the Corporate Director of Children's Services as a follow up to the NHS London Safeguarding Children Improvement Team visit in 2010. The project will consider how effectively action plans which were devised following these reviews have been implemented by the council and NHS Harrow. A final report is expected to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June.

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) – NHS NW London Commissioning Strategy

NHS NW London is proposing significant changes to the delivery of health services in its commissioning strategy and, as required, is now consulting with all of the NW London boroughs (Harrow, Brent, Ealing, Hillingdon, Westminster, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham) which will be impacted by these changes. The JOSC has been established to facilitate engagement with NHS NW London, but this does not preclude individual authorities presenting an independent view of changes proposed. NHS NW London must consult with the JOSC on both their consultation plan and also on the proposals for change themselves. A shadow JOSC has been established and this is meeting informally from March and thereafter the formal JOSC will begin to meet in June. Formal consultation is proposed between June and September and a number of concerns of the timing of this have already been raised.

A final report from the JOSC will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in the autumn.

Emerging Issues

Review of Staff Terms and Conditions

As part of the need for the council to deliver significant savings, proposals have been developed to modernise staff terms and conditions of service. These proposals will both deliver savings for the authority and also support the delivery of changing working practices. Negotiations with the Trades Unions have been taking place over a number of months and the Director of Human Resources and Development and Shared Services has also approached scrutiny to request scrutiny's consideration of the proposals.

This request was considered by the scrutiny leadership group on 19th March and the group has agreed to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny committee that a challenge panel to consider the proposals is included in the scrutiny work programme.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report

Performance Issues

There are no performance issues associated with this report

Environmental Impact

There is no environmental impact associated with this report

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications associated with this report

Equalities implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report

Corporate Priorities

All

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**Contact:**

Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 8420 9387

Background Papers:

None