

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

19 MARCH 2013

Chairman:	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
Councillors:	* Sue Anderson * Kam Chana * Ann Gate * Zarina Khalid	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Paul Osborn * Sasi Suresh (4) * Stephen Wright
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) † Mrs J Rammelt † Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) * Mrs A Khan
Non-voting Co-opted:	Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
In attendance: (Councillors)	Graham Henson Phillip O'Dell	Minute 374 Minute 372

- * Denotes Member present
- (4) Denotes category of Reserve Member
- † Denotes apologies received

366. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Krishna James

Reserve Member

Councillor Sasi Suresh

367. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

Agenda Item 9 – Data Quality Assurance

Councillor Sue Anderson declared, during the course of the meeting, a pecuniary interest in that she was employed by the NHS. She would leave the room whilst this aspect of the report was considered and voted upon.

368. Minutes

Referring to Minute 363, the report of the Chair of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee, a Member stated that there had been an unacceptable delay in the provision of SAP reports that had been requested at a meeting of the Sub-Committee. The Chair of the Sub-Committee expressed her disappointment that the information requested had not been provided and urged that action be taken to address this and stated that she hoped that this issue need not be raised again. Another Member reminded the Committee of the Access to Information protocol and that there were timescales that had to be adhered to. If the information was not going to be made available his expectation would be that both the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer be requested to attend the Committee in order to provide an explanation.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2013 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

369. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

370. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

371. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that no references had been received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

372. Introduction by the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise

The Chair welcomed the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise and Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety to the meeting.

The Corporate Director stated that in terms of priorities her mantra was operational excellence and agenda for growth. In terms of operational excellence, this was about putting the customer at the heart of everything her service delivered. It was also about a service that impacted positively on the Council's reputation and was valued by all as well as having a workforce that felt valued and well led. In terms of agenda for growth, this was about exploiting the opportunities that still existed in Harrow and to recognise the role Harrow played in West London.

The Corporate Director advised that there were a number of challenges ahead. There was no commonly held view as to what 'good' looked like in her service and Members often held diametrically opposed views and this had to be balanced. Whilst there were significant challenges in terms of the budget, the budget forecast for the current year was for an underspend. She reported that there was a need to reduce some service specifications and to engage with the community to see if residents were willing to do certain activities themselves. Other challenges included inconsistent levels of staff morale and poor management in some areas of the service.

In terms of opportunities, the Corporate Director reported that whilst there was an opportunity to create a unified workforce and that she was in discussion with her management team on plans, these could not be delivered at a time of intense change. Different ways of engaging with staff had to be found as there had been too great a focus on management in the past. There were opportunities to learn from the best and to put Harrow at the forefront of place shaping.

Members then asked a series of questions which included the following:

- A Member asked what the consensus view of what a good service looked like, what the priorities were and how they were being measured. The Corporate Director responded that this would come out of the service planning process and once the plans were developed they would be shared more widely.

The Member expressed concern at the response received and stated that he had been advised that the commissioning process panel had focused on outcomes and now the budget had been set. He was therefore unclear as to how officers had got this far through the process without knowing the outcomes sought. He sought clarification on the outcomes set in the commissioning process panel and what outcomes were going to be delivered to residents. The Corporate Director advised that the Corporate Plan set out the priorities that would be delivered through the service plans.

- In response to a Member's question as to the Corporate Director's ideas for improving staff morale, the Corporate Director advised that it was inevitable that staff would have concerns about their future in an organisation that was down sizing, particularly if the individuals had been employed by the same employer for many years. There had already been significant staff reductions, particularly at management level, and until all those that were leaving had left the organisation and

the new employees were in post, the service could not move forward. Currently, the transition was being managed by managers who did not know their own future.

- A Member sought clarification as to what the Corporate Director intended when she talked about 'learning from the best' and was advised that many other organisations had already actioned issues/plans that Harrow was doing or intended to do. Many organisations went through the same process and due to capacity issues it would be necessary to use other's ideas.
- In response to a Member's query as to what was being done to support those staff with a lack of transferable skills, the Corporate Director advised that a support package had been put in place and included application and interview training. In addition, bespoke sessions would be organised for individuals. The reality was that she would not be able to identify positions for potentially 100 displaced staff.
- A Member stated that through PRISM it appeared that the directorate would be losing many of its senior officers and he questioned how the service could move forward with the loss of this level of experience. The Corporate Director confirmed that there was to be a reduction from 30 to 15 managers but that the previous management structure had not had the spans of control required by the organisation. She stated that management capacity should be satisfactory but that she was aware that experienced officers would be leaving the Council's employ. The Portfolio Holder added that the service had changed and that the process would bring forward staff that were capable but who may not necessarily have the experience or years service.

Another Member questioned whether the IT support for the new ways of working had been analysed as implementing new systems could take an inordinate amount of time. The Corporate Director advised that there was already a significant amount of technology in place and that there was a full project implementation plan which she would share with Members.

A Member requested that the new structure in relation to PRISM be circulated to members of the Committee as it might be something that Scrutiny Members would wish to consider. Another Member asked whether there were opportunities within the new staffing structure as there needed to be a balance of staff. The Corporate Director confirmed the need to try and balance expertise but flagged up that there may be potential issues in recruiting managers from within the service in that the result could be an all white male management team. Good managers that understood the impact of their actions on other areas of the service were required.

- In response to a Member's challenge as to what the Corporate Director had done in terms of viewing the customer experience, what she had

learnt from it and something specific that she had changed as a result, the Corporate Director advised that the customer journey was key to the service. She spent one day a fortnight at the Depot and had regular conversations with both the staff and unions.

- A Member sought clarification as to which parks would no longer be closed at night and was advised that the hierarchy of parks was being considered as had been agreed by Council in 2012. Some parks would be exemplar whilst others would be park and meadow land. The Portfolio Holder added that the Council would be working with the Parks' Users Association.
- In terms of the agenda for growth and the ambitious plans for the borough, a Member questioned whether the enterprise element of the directorate was being undermined and whether there would be sufficient planners and enforcement officers. The Corporate Director shared the Member's concern but advised that enforcement activity had been safeguarded in the budget. It may, however, be necessary to work with other boroughs. There had been fewer reductions in planning than there might have been and she was confident that the service could cope. In terms of major projects there was, however, no capacity.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director and Portfolio Holder for their attendance and responses..

373. Families First - Troubled Families

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Quality Assurance, Commissioning and Schools which outlined the government's Troubled Families Initiative. Families First was Harrow's approach to the initiative and must identify and work with 395 families during the project.

The Chair welcomed Divisional Director of Quality Assurance, Commissioning and Schools and the Families First Project Co-ordinator to the meeting and drew Members' attention to the case studies which had been circulated on Part II of the agenda. The Divisional Director outlined the content of the report and advised that early feedback on the project was positive.

Members then made comments and asked questions as follows:

- In response to a question in relation to measurement of success and whether any guidance had been given, the Divisional Director advised that the Council was required to show that children that had been persistently absent from school now attended, a workless adult was now on a pathway to employment and that a family with anti social behaviour had stopped behaving in that way.
- The Divisional Director confirmed that targets were being set on a family by family basis which should then aggregate by July 2013. Payment by Results were available through the 3 years of the project.

- A Member sought clarification as to the number of key workers and their capacity to deal with the workload. The Divisional Director advised that there were 4 teams located within the Early Intervention Service with approximately 10-12 per team. Good practice indicated that each key worker would have a caseload of between 12-17 cases. The officer advised that the number of cases and their intensity would vary.
- A Member asked whether the project was self financing or was at cost to the Council. It was expected that an increase in payment by results would be achieved. Attachment fees would be received throughout the project, but the funding was front loaded. A maximum of £4,000 was available per family consisting of up front attachment fees and payment by results. The proportion of up front fee decreases each year as the element of Payment by Results increases.
- A Member stated that it appeared that the role of keyworker was crucial and she questioned whether, in the long term, there would be issues of continuity and how this would be managed. The Divisional Director advised that there would inevitably changes in staff through the programme but that it was the role of the manager to manage any exits and handover. This would, however, be a challenge for families.
 - The Divisional Director advised that keyworkers came from a range of backgrounds ie social work, youth work, education welfare, and this meant that there was a multi disciplinary team. Due to the nature of the criteria supplied by government for identifying families, the families in the programme were, however, not necessarily the most difficult to reach. To date only 2 of the 125 families approach had indicated that they did not wish to participate.
- In response to a question as to what criteria would be set for the future in order that families did not require this level of involvement, the Divisional Director advised that as the service became better at identifying issues there would be a reduction in referrals to social care. School attendance and exclusions were an early indicator of issues.
- A Member asked whether there was any particular geographical area that the families requiring assistance resided and was advised that officers could provide details of the analysis done.
- In response to a Member's question as to how the benefits gained by partners would be captured if the Council bore all the costs, the Divisional Director advised that the position would be clearer in July and that the case studies provided a direction of travel. In terms of capturing benefits for the borough this needed to be considered in relation to longer term team work. He advised that there was a link with the police and that they had family mentors working in a non statutory role.

- It was suggested that grass roots community groups be contacted to see if they could assist with the project.

The Chair thanked the Divisional Director and officer for their attendance and responses. He suggested that the officers liaise with Scrutiny Lead Members and report back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

374. Data Quality Assurance

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning which was a follow up to a report considered by Members in November 2012. The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, the Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning and another officer to the meeting.

The Divisional Director, in introducing the report, stated that overall it could be concluded that Harrow's data quality standard was relatively sound although there were some inconsistencies. An officer added that it was also important to recognise that there was broad work on information management governance going on and that the internal audit department had provided input into the report before Members.

A Member expressed concern at the lack of data in the report and, referring to paragraph 2.14 of the report, questioned how Members could identify a subtle issue or where there was not such a high level of checking. Members relied on the performance data they received and needed to have confidence in it. An officer reported that the no further action report in relation to the increase in referrals to social care had been considered by the Corporate Director of Children and Families and that as a result of that issue there was now a different approach. There was a dedicated team carrying out case file audit that could identify the more subtle data issues and a data quality policy was being developed. In addition, further training of staff had been carried out and a clear explanation of the requirements in terms of data given. Members were also informed that computer software would prevent a member of staff accessing the system if they had not completed the online training.

In response to a Member's comment that reference to data quality requirements should be included in managers' roles and responsibilities and that failure to comply should result in sanctions, the officer responded that there were many examples where managers took a lot of care. There would, however, always be exceptions to this.

In terms of Members having to rely on information that the NHS provided, the officer confirmed that there was an expectation that the Council complete their information governance toolkit. The public health team used NHS data from hospitals and GPs and it was the analysis of that information which was key. Another Member stated that he was yet to be convinced that public health was providing accurate data. If residents and users were not recognised the Council would be under funded due to poor data.

A Member questioned whether 100% of the Housing stock survey data was available. The officer advised that considerable work was going on in the housing area and the data could be provided to the Member. The Divisional Director added that Housing was one of the Council's success stories in that improved data had transformed how the service was run.

In terms of changing the culture in relation to data quality and a Member's comment that, having heard about the improvement in the Housing department, a training programme would be beneficial, the officer commented cultural change was being sought and the Youth Offending Team was a good example of this.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their attendance and responses.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Committee support the coverage of data quality in the 2013-14 internal audit plan.

375. Scope for Accessible Transport Review

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning accompanied the scope of the Accessible Transport review.

Following a Member's comment in relation to costing any recommendations arising from the review, the officer reminded the Committee that it was not their role to do that and that it was a matter for officers in the service area to advise Cabinet with regards to the cost of recommendations.

Members made a number of comments on the scope including that the reporting arrangement required amendment, the review group should request a representative of Transport for London (TfL) to accompany Members on any relevant visits, consideration be given to the inclusion of NHS transport and that it might be helpful to look at Council provided services as part of the round table discussion.

RESOLVED: That the scope of the Accessible Transport review be approved.

376. Motion to Exclude the Press and Public

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item for the reason set out below:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reason</u>
13.	Families First – Troubled Families	Information under paragraph 2 (contains information likely to reveal the identity of individuals).

377. Families First - Troubled Families

RESOLVED: That the appendix be noted.

378. Termination of Meeting

In accordance with the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At 9.57 pm to continue until 10.10 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 10.03 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chairman