

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

25 FEBRUARY 2014

Chairman: * Councillor Jerry Miles

Councillors: * Sue Anderson * Phillip O'Dell
* Marilyn Ashton * Bill Phillips
* Mano Dharmarajah * Anthony Seymour
* Chris Mote † Yogesh Teli

Voting Co-opted: (Voluntary Aided) (Parent Governors)
Mrs J Rammelt † Mrs A Khan
Reverend P Reece

Non-voting Co-opted: Harrow Youth Parliament Representative

In attendance: (Councillors) Paul Osborn Minute 483

* Denotes Member present
† Denotes apologies received

477. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

478. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Item 7 – Corporate Plan

Councillor Sue Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her son was in receipt of support from Supporting People. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

479. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 17 December 2013, 8 January 2014 and 23 January 2014, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

480. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

481. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

482. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that no references had been received.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

483. Corporate Plan

The Committee received a report which contained the proposed Corporate Plan for 2014-15 which set out the Council's strategic direction, vision and priorities for the year ahead.

The Chair advised the Committee that the report had already been considered by the Cabinet and that the Corporate Plan would be finalised at the Council meeting on 27 February 2014. The Committee were being asked to provide comments that would be forwarded to the Council meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources introduced the report and made the following points:

- the Corporate Plan set out the priorities for the Council for 2014/15 as Cleaner, Safer and Fairer;
- the evidence bases that had been utilised as part of preparing the Corporate Plan included the results from the last Place Survey, the Let's Talk consultation conducted with residents by the Labour administration in 2010, the Reputation Tracker conducted by the Council and call volumes in Access Harrow;

- in the Place Survey results, residents had identified tackling crime and having clean streets as their most popular priorities. These two areas were also identified by residents as requiring improvement;
- the Let's Talk consultation conducted by the Labour administration in 2010 had demonstrated that the majority of respondents had supported the priority of 'keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe'. Half of respondents had also stated that this was the single top priority;
- the Reputation Tracker had provided evidence that if the Council acted on the concerns of residents, this would result in improved satisfaction with the Council.

A Member queried whether the views provided by residents were actually a perception of residents related to a service that they had received in a specific area. This therefore might not be an accurate representation and may highlight the importance of universal services against those less well used services such as adult social care. The Portfolio Holder responded that the Reputation Tracker was designed to try and address this issue by the use of open ended questions, identifying what they were most concerned about and their subsequent views. In preparing the priorities within the Corporate Plan, it was intended that these priorities were focused on the needs of residents.

A Member commented that his recent experience of a family member using services provided by the Council in relation to Adult Social Care had been fast, clean and efficient. The Portfolio Holder responded that Adult Social Care had been greatly improved within the Council since the previous Commission for Social Care Inspectorates' inspection regime and this was due to the success of the current and previous administration. However it was important to remember that the costs of the service continued to increase and this was a real challenge for the future.

A Member asked whether the size of a particular service could result in any opinions about it being biased. The Portfolio Holder responded that care was required on this and whilst data and figures were important when assessing service delivery for small teams, this should not be used exclusively and further considerations were required.

A Member queried how many residents had utilised the Grant to Move scheme. The Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning advised that he would obtain this information and circulate it to Members after the meeting.

A Member commented that he was pleased that the Corporate Plan placed emphasis on an effective and efficient organisation. The Portfolio Holder advised that a key challenge in relation to this was the Council's IT infrastructure. There had been major issues encountered and the Council was assessing its future options in terms of re-procurement. It was essential that the Council did this correctly for the future and cross party consensus would be sought. It was also important for the Council to ensure that its procurement processes were correct and ensuring that its performance management systems measured its delivery. The Portfolio Holder

acknowledged that care was needed in the use of targets and the interpretation of performance information.

A Member also commented that it was to be commended that the Corporate Plan was succinct, contained all relevant information and was easy to read. Another Member commented that it was heartening to see that residents were being treated as customers within the Corporate Plan and were being valued. This was reflected in the whole ethos of the Council. There was also evidence to suggest that if there was a cleaner environment, it would lead to less crime.

The Portfolio Holder responded that in terms of perception this was undoubtedly true. The Portfolio Holder then spoke about Access Harrow and highlighted that the perception of residents in relation to the length of time it took to resolve their issue changed depending on the response they had received. It was also important to recognise that in some services, there were no performance indicators and this was something that had to be corrected and these provided useful information and their analysis aided to make informed decisions.

A Member of the Committee commented that there was an issue to correct when ringing the Council in that the automated voice recognition system sometimes did not recognise relevant services or names when residents called. The Portfolio Holder responded that the system was continuously developed and is dependent upon the correct contact information being available on the central database. Its performance increased day by day.

A Member also asked how information was recorded by Access Harrow. The Portfolio Holder advised that all contacts were recorded on a Customer Relationship Management system which categorised calls into service areas and the type of call. The data received was also sent to Improvement Boards to identify any areas for development.

A Member emphasised that targets and statistics were sometimes misrepresented and that it was important to take this into account. Residents had recently told her that calls made to Adult Social Services were not responded to. The Portfolio Holder replied that he would investigate the issue. It was important that any call made to the Council was answered and logged. In relation to targets, it was important in the first instance to ensure that the right targets were set. This is why it was important to have an understanding of the wider issues.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Committee's comments be considered.

RESOLVED ITEMS

484. Report from the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chair

The Committee received a report providing a summary of the issues considered by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2014.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

485. Scrutiny Lead Member Report

The Committee considered the report of the Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning which accompanied the reports from Scrutiny Lead Members.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the actions proposed within the Scrutiny Lead Members report be agreed.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.30 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chairman