

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

16 SEPTEMBER 2014

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Chairman: | * Councillor Jerry Miles | |
| Councillors: | * Ghazanfar Ali * Richard Almond * Jeff Anderson * Michael Borio | * Kam Chana * Barry Macleod-Cullinane (2) * Paul Osborn * Kiran Ramchandani |
| 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) | Simon Brown Varsha Parmar Sachin Shah | Minute 22 Minute 21 Minute 23 |

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

13. The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

RESOLVED: That Committee Procedure Rule 26.1 be suspended to enable the recording or photographing or broadcasting of any part of the meeting.

14. Introduction and Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the new clerk. He proposed a vote of thanks to the previous clerk, Alison Atherton, for her support and hard work on behalf of the Committee over the last four years.

15. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Chris Mote

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

16. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 7 – Community Safety Plan 2014/15 – 2016/17

Councillor Richard Almond declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he worked as a criminal lawyer and was active in the criminal justice system. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered.

Agenda Item 9 – Harrow Progress Toward National Procurement Strategy Recommendations

Councillor Paul Osborn declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had been the Portfolio Holder responsible for securing certain contracts. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered, providing none of these was to be discussed in detail.

17. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2014, be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Page 3, final paragraph

Line 2 - insert 'Labour' before 'Chancellor'.

Line 4 – insert 'in 2010' after 'general election'.

Page 4, paragraph 2

Line 2 – insert 'as opposed to Council employees and union representatives' after 'consulted'.

Page 5, bullet point 4

That the figures in the Corporate Plan are for the financial year 2013-14.

18. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

19. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

20. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that no references from Cabinet or Council had been received.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

21. Community Safety Plan 2014/15 - 2016/17

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director of Resources which set out the proposed Community Safety Plan.

Following a brief introduction by the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Crime & Community Safety, Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

- A Member questioned whether there was evidence to show that the production of a Community Safety Plan contributed to a reduction in crime. The Portfolio Holder responded that there was no evidence as such, but that it was a requirement for the Council to have a Community Safety Plan.
- A Member felt greater definition was required in respect of the Council Priorities' target groups, in order to measure successfully whether the Plan supported positive impacts on crime and its consequences and to allow better focus on areas with the greatest potential impact. An officer explained that the Community Safety Plan was an overarching document which brought together other plans, and that target groups, such as 'families' could be affected by a range of problems, and therefore covered within several programmes, each of which would have its own discrete targets.
- Members noted the increase in domestic abuse crimes and that Harrow experienced a higher proportion of this crime than other London boroughs. The Borough Commander stated that in his view this was a welcome statistic, as he believed it reflected a significant increase in the reporting of such crimes, which historically had been under-reported, and demonstrated greater confidence amongst victims that the abuse would be taken seriously and that perpetrators would be pursued. He reported that Harrow had the highest number of arrests in London and a high number of convictions, which in turn would promote higher levels of reporting domestic abuse incidents. A Member expressed disappointment at the lack of comparative data, and queried whether it would be possible to determine if lower figures would demonstrate an actual reduction in crime, or a return to a reluctance to report crimes.

- Members commented on the discrepancy between low levels of crime generally in Harrow, against high levels of fear of crime. The Borough Commander agreed that this was a conundrum and he was working with communications staff to consider how best to address this through the media.
- In response to queries about crime statistics, the Borough Commander explained the following:
 - the use of force was the qualifying distinction between crimes listed as ‘theft from person’ or ‘robbery’;
 - the apparent variation in the gender of victims reflected the fact that most reported thefts and robberies were amongst boys, and that women were rarely the target of ‘muggings’ or street crime as such;
 - there was an assumption that reported complaints were genuine and investigated as such, unless they were so unlikely or outrageous as to obviously not be true, and therefore all complainants were considered ‘victims of crime’.
- Members observed that the Community Safety Plan did not set out how priorities would be achieved; the full cost and impact on victims and services; the level of cross-departmental work in addressing targets; any inter-linking with the Youth Justice Plan; and a clear scope of what was and was not included in the Plan. An officer stated that as it was intended as an overarching document, bringing together other plans, it was not intended to provide a greater level of detail. He also stated that the targets identified by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime were the main drivers for inclusion within the scope of the Plan. The Borough Commander commented that, in respect of young offenders, the priority was to prevent young people moving on to a life of crime, and to use shock or diversionary strategies to achieve this.

RESOLVED: That the Committee’s comments be referred to Cabinet.

22. Harrow Youth Offending Partnership Youth Justice Plan 2014-2015

The Committee received the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families which set out the draft Youth Justice Plan for 2014-15.

Following a brief introduction by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools & Young People, the following comments were made and the following questions were asked:

- A Member questioned, in view of the increase in the number of volunteers, whether training was provided and whether there was there a high rate of turnover. An officer responded that many volunteers did ‘1 to 1’ work with young people, and others were members of the Referral Order Panels. More volunteers were needed for the Panels,

with the aim of increasing the diversity of the pool of volunteers to better reflect the ethnicity of young people who attended the Panel. Eight days of training were provided, and these volunteers rarely left the service.

- A Member questioned whether the statistics transferred into adult offending, and whether it was possible to extrapolate a likely increase in adult offending as the age of young offenders approached the cut-off point. An officer responded that the strategy aimed to divert young offenders away from the path of repeat offending, but that a small number who entered the criminal justice system would become regular and repeat offenders.
- In response to a question in relation to the 3 outcomes listed, it was explained that 3 outcomes were directed by the Youth Justice Board for all Youth Offending Teams and that there were 3 further local outcome indicators.
- Members were advised about the impact of problems with IT. Following the migration to Citrix and the new server, the team had experienced significant difficulty in using YOIS (the youth offending information system) which was where all activity with young people was recorded. Being unable to access data for a lengthy period would affect performance figures as data could not be processed. The Interim Corporate Director of Children and Families further explained that Harrow had been identified as the only authority not providing timely data to the YJB and, as a result, had been placed on an Action Plan. Harrow would remain on an Action Plan until the issue was resolved. It would be possible to upgrade the system to be compatible with the basic infrastructure once it was clear that the investment would secure the necessary improvements.
- It was confirmed that referrals were received from the police. Not all cases were referred to Triage, and serious cases would not be referred for triage.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Harrow Youth Offending Partnership Youth Justice Plan 2014-15 be approved; and

RESOLVED: That the Committee's comments be referred to Cabinet.

RESOLVED ITEMS

23. Harrow Progress Toward National Procurement Strategy Recommendations

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director of Resources which set out the Council's current position against the recommendations in the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2014.

Following a brief overview by the Divisional Director, Commercial, Contracts and Procurement, Members made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- A Member asked if there was a timescale for addressing the 'red' rating for identifying 2nd tier spend? The Divisional Director said that it would probably take 3 to 4 years to be fully compliant as it would take this long to build in policies and targets into new contracts.
- In response to a query about whether local businesses were supported to improve and meet procurement criteria, the Divisional Director stated that events had been held for SMEs on understanding procurement processes and completing pre-qualification questionnaires. It was hoped to create a website where all of Harrow's requirements, as well as business to business opportunities, could be posted to provide a catalyst for contracting with local suppliers, particularly SMEs.
- In respect of whether there were barriers preventing local businesses securing contracts with the Council, the Divisional Director considered that knowing which portal to look for opportunities, difficulty in completing pre-qualification questionnaires, and procurement policies generally, such as asking for unnecessary levels of insurance, were all factors.
- A Member asked whether the Council should seek procurement according to ethical principles, for instance, among companies who pay the London living wage, or whether it should always seek to secure the best value, particularly in the light of cuts and limited resources? The Divisional Director explained that contracts were assessed on a case by case basis. Certain services were known not to pay the London living wage, such as security, cleaning and personal care. In such cases 2 prices would be sought and Members would be able to make a decision accordingly.
- A Member queried whether the Council's Pension Fund should also seek to invest according to ethical principles. The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Major Contracts pointed out that members of the Pension Fund Committee acted as trustees of the Fund, and were semi-autonomous. It would be a matter for them to consider, and they could not be directed to act in a particular manner. In respect of procurement, he believed that ethical standards should be considered in the procurement process alongside the need to close the budget gap, and if it were possible to meet both requirements then that would be done.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the current position of the Council's procurement processes, and procedures toward the recommendations for Single Tier Councils set

out in the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2014, be noted;

- (2) an annual Procurement Report be submitted to the Committee, to provide information on procurement activity in the previous year, progress toward delivery of targets set out in the Council's Commercial and Procurement Strategy and progress against the recommendations of the NPS.

24. Scrutiny Work Programme

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Work programme 2014-15 be agreed.

25. Minutes of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the minutes of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 7 July be noted;
- (2) the minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 3 July 2014 be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.35 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chairman