

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

9 DECEMBER 2014

Chair:	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
Councillors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ghazanfar Ali * Richard Almond * Jeff Anderson * Michael Borio Simon Brown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Kam Chana Graham Henson * Barry Macleod-Cullinane (2) * Kiran Ramchandani * Lynda Seymour (3)
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
	† Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	† Mrs A Khan
Non-voting Co-opted:	* Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
In attendance (Councillors)	Simon Brown Graham Henson	Minute 53 and 54 Minute 52

* Denotes Member present
(2) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

47. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance of the following duly constituted Reserve Members:

Ordinary Member

Councillor Chris Mote
Councillor Paul Osborn

Reserve Member

Councillor Lynda Seymour
Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

48. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 8 – Children and Families Self-Assessment

Councillor Lynda Seymour declared a non-pecuniary interest in that both her children received speech and language therapy from Children's Services. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered.

Agenda Item 7 – Programme Minerva

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had been a member of the Cabinet when the decision had been taken to end the Capita contract. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered.

49. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2014 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

50. Public Questions and Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put or petitions received at this meeting.

51. References from Council/Cabinet

None received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

52. Programme Minerva

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director, Resources, which provided an update on progress to date on Programme Minerva since the last report in April. He reminded the Committee of the rationale and intent for the programme and described the scope and market tests undertaken to determine which services would remain in-house and which might be outsourced or shared.

The Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation gave an update on the procurement exercise to replace the Council's provider of ICT services, including the professional advice sought and the progress on short-listing prospective contractors.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources & Policy Development informed the Committee that there had been cross party involvement on the programme, and that the update did not entirely reflect the amount of work that had been undertaken to date.

The Corporate Director of Resources described research into opportunities for shared services, and the barriers to successful integration, which were largely systems based.

Members raised the following points:

- the need for a thorough assessment of risks and mitigation measures for the new contracts, with appropriate penalty clauses;
- the need for full due diligence in advance of the contract being let;
- the scope for network security, back-up and resolution within deadlines.

A Member requested that a glossary be provided in respect of the abbreviations and jargon used in the report, as while this was known to the professionals involved, Members and the public would not necessarily be clear about the terms used.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) progress to date on Programme Minerva be noted;
- (2) that a further progress report be brought back to the Committee in 6 months.

53. Children and Families Self-Assessment

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director, Children and Families, which provided the additional information requested by the Committee at its meeting on 7 October 2014, including a 'scorecard' and summary of strengths and weaknesses. He outlined the assessment grades, adding that there was now a much stricter inspection regime, and that only a handful of authorities achieved a 'good' rating. He was satisfied that Harrow's Children's Services were in a strong, improving position, and was confident that no child was unsafe. He stated that actions were being taken to achieve improvement where required, and that the service hoped to recruit more permanent social workers. One factor shared by 'good' authorities was that staff had manageable caseloads, with an average of 15 per social worker. Harrow was aiming for a model caseload number of 18, but with a current number of 21/22, as it had not been possible to recruit a full complement of social workers.

A Member commented that it would have been helpful to have the 'weaknesses' listed first, as these were the areas the Committee would focus on within the requirement to monitor performance. Another Member asked if

a colour version of the report could be circulated in order to aid comparison and understanding of the statistics provided.

In response to the Youth Parliament representative's query about whether the closure of children's centres would impact on the Council's ability to deliver services and achieve improvements, the Corporate Director explained that the service would look to reach the same number of vulnerable families by using data and feedback to plot locations of the greatest need and target action accordingly. Public consultation was underway, and would inform the final proposals. He commented that keeping children safe should be a community-led endeavour, and it was important to build capacity within the community and across agencies.

Members were also informed about cultural issues and the difficulty of identifying prospective adoptive and foster parents within specific ethnic groups.

RESOLVED: That the report and additional information be noted.

54. Child Sexual Exploitation

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director, Children and Families, which set out an overview of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), including background information on the national context, CSE in Harrow, and Harrow's response to the risk of CSE.

The Independent Chair of Harrow Safeguarding Children Board and the Service Manager, Quality Assurance, described the extent of the problem locally, and the opportunities and mechanisms for identifying those children most at risk, including increased awareness on the part of those working with children, and the wide range of symptoms and signs that could indicate a problem.

Members considered their role in supporting and monitoring the work of safeguarding teams, and compared Harrow's position in relation to other boroughs.

A Member queried the use of the word 'Asian' in describing the identity of perpetrators, as he believed it was possible to specify the ethnicity of certain groups, and that this should be done.

In response to a Member's query about the scope for working with Youth Offending Teams and the Safer Harrow Partnership, the Independent Chair stated that there had been meetings with Safer Harrow Partnership in order to clarify roles and actions.

The Head of School Improvement explained that officers were focussing on school policies and procedures to increase awareness among staff and assist them in identifying existing or potential targets and addressing concerns. Schools would also look to educate children through their PHSE programmes.

A Member added that work on combatting female genital mutilation and forced marriages should continue and form part of the strategy.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the strategic direction of the partnership action plan be endorsed.

55. Termination of the Meeting

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

RESOLVED: At

- (1) 9.55 pm to continue until 10.30 pm;
- (2) and at 10.25 pm to continue until 10.45 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.35 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chair