

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

20 SEPTEMBER 2016

Chair:	* Paul Osborn (Vice-Chair in the Chair)	
Councillors:	* Ghazanfar Ali * Richard Almond * Mrs Chika Amadi * Jeff Anderson † Jo Dooley	* Ameet Jogia * Chris Mote * Kairul Kareema Marikar (2)
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) Vacancy Vacancy
Non-voting Co-opted:	* Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
In attendance: (Councillors)	Simon Brown Barry Macleod-Cullinane Mrs Christine Robson	Minute 178 Minute 179 Minute 176

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

170. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Jerry Miles

Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar

171. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

All Agenda items

Councillor Kairul Kareema Marikar declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was Portfolio Holder Assistant for Environment, Crime and Community Safety and that she worked in the field of Health & Social Care. She would remain in the room whilst the matters were considered and voted upon.

Agenda Items 7 - Implementation of the New Youth Offending Case Management System

Councillor Paul Osborn declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had been the Portfolio Holder responsible for terminating the Capita IT contract. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

172. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2016 and the two Special meetings held on 12 July 2016, be taken as read and signed as correct records..

173. Public Questions & Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that none were received.

174. References from Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the two References from Cabinet be noted.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

175. Youth Justice Plan

The Committee considered a report which set out the annual updated Youth Justice Plan.

Following a brief overview of the report by officers, Members asked the following questions and made the following comments. Officers responded accordingly:

- What was the relationship between the data relating to first time offenders, the rates of re-offending and the issuing of custodial sentences?
- Was the ethnicity and any gang affiliation or gang membership of offenders and re-offenders monitored and was this data available?
- Why had the Black/African/Caribbean/Black British group been consistently over represented in youth offending services in recent years? Why was the white population now over represented in youth offending services?
- What figures were available regarding gang activity and knife crime in the borough? Had there been a noticeable increase in the levels of hate crime in the borough in the wake of Brexit?
- The figures showed that there had been a steady decrease in the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System between 2010-2011 and 2013-2014, however, this had increased in 2014-15. The figures also showed an increase in re-offending rates. What were the reasons for these increases? Had the types of offences committed worsened on a national level?
- What improvement had there been in the performance of the Youth Offending Service (YOT) recently?
- What was the reason for the high proportion of Children Looked After (CLAs) in the YOT caseload?
- If a young person was cautioned or arrested but not charged with an offence, would they still enter the youth justice system?

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) had set the following three outcome indicators for the Youth Offending Team, namely, to reduce the number of First Time Entrants (FTE) to the Youth Justice System, to reduce Re-offending and to reduce the Use of Custodial sentences. There was no single reason for the recent increase in rates of offending. There remained a strong relationship between FTEs and re-offending and the re-offending rates related to a small cohort of 'hard-core' re-offenders. Because the overall number of FTEs was relatively low, the figures for re-offending may at first glance appear high. It was important to note that the numbers of offenders in question were in the hundreds and not thousands.

Data relating to the ethnicity of offenders was monitored but had not been included in the report under consideration. Due to Harrow's unique demography, it was difficult to make comparisons to National and London averages for the ethnicity of young offenders. Thus, all ethnicity comparisons were made against the local demographic make-up of the 10-17 year old population.

The over-representation of Black/African/Caribbean/Black/Mixed British group in the service was a common trend in most urban areas. However, there were a number of complex factors for this and this over-representation may equally relate to poverty and deprivation as much as to race/ethnicity.

There had been an increase in knife crime both locally and nationally. The YOT team were involved in the 'Violence, vulnerability and exploitation' initiative which was focussed on prevention. Each young offender had an individual plan. There was also improved data sharing between the YOT and local partners, such as the Police and the Community Safety Team. Gang related activity was proportionately lower in Harrow in comparison to other London boroughs, however, it was important to note that recently Harrow had been recognised by the Home Office as a 'priority borough' with regard to gang activity. There was a potential relationship between the small cohort of re-offenders and gang affiliation and this phenomenon would require further investigation and analysis.

Although there had been a spike in the levels of hate crime nationally in the wake of Brexit, the Borough Commander had confirmed that there had been no significant increase in reported hate crime in Harrow, and it was not clear whether recent local incidences of hate crime could be attributed to gang activity. The officer undertook to look into the figures and report back to Members after the meeting.

An officer undertook to provide Committee Members with more detailed information and figures relating to knife crime in the borough. The Chair advised that the issue of knife crime and gang activity locally would require further scrutiny either by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee or by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The increase in the rates of re-offending and in the seriousness of the nature of offences was a national trend. Changes in local demography, such as the substantial increase in the numbers of young people in the borough (as borne out by the annual schools' census), increasing numbers of whom had arrived from war torn countries and had complex needs plus the existence of pockets of deprivation in the borough were all contributing factors.

The Youth Justice Board, which was an external body, no longer considered the Harrow Youth Offending Team (HYOT) a priority YOT based on improved outcome indicators. There was a robust process of scrutiny in place of the YOT Board.

The high proportion of Children Looked After (CLA) in the YOT caseload was a cause for concern. The figures in the report may be misleading as often CLA who entered the system often had complex personal circumstances and needs. Some had offended prior to entering the system and others subsequent to entering the system. The issue of CLA fell within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel which would be receiving a report regarding this in the near future.

Increasingly, out of court disposals allowed the police to deal quickly and proportionately with low-level, first-time offending which did not merit

prosecution at court. Some offences may expire. Furthermore, YOT triage services were aimed at reducing the number of young people entering the criminal justice system and ensuring they were effectively diverted away from offending. The officer undertook to provide information to Councillor Almond regarding this issue after the meeting.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Committee's comments be noted.

176. Local Assurance Test [LAT] Review

The Committee considered a report which set out further progress made since the Local Assurance Test (LAT) Progress Review undertaken in April 2016, by the Local Government Association (LGA) following the establishment of the People Services Directorate.

Following a brief overview of the report, Members asked the following questions and made the following comments, which were responded to accordingly:

- When would the People Services Directorate be reviewed again? To what extent had the Key Recommendations of the Review been implemented?
- What were the circumstances surrounding the operational weakness in the MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub)?
- Why had the same two senior managers who had carried out the initial LAT Review in May 2015 also been re-appointed to carry out the review in April 2016?

Officers could provide an update report to the Committee in 9-12 months' time, if required. However, there was no requirement to carry out a follow-up review of the Directorate.

Progress on the 4 additional Key Recommendations specified in the Review, was as follows:

- the Directorate had a more cohesive approach and was able to deliver a more integrated function;
- an integrated 0-25 years Children and Young Adults Disability Service had been established,
- an integrated commissioning (Adults and Children's) service had been established and operational for the previous six months;
- a single post of Principal Social Worker for both Adults and Children had been created and would shortly be appointed to;

- a single Harrow Social Work Conference (Adults and Children's) was in the advanced stage of planning.

An independent Review of the MASH in January 2016 had highlighted significant areas for improvement. A robust Action Plan had been drawn up and implemented and a second MASH review, completed in July 2016, had identified significant improved progress. Both Reviews had been reported to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

Both the Local Test in 2015 and the Review in 2016 had been undertaken by the Local Government Association Children's Improvement Adviser. The LGA had provided a sector-led adviser to carry out both LAT Reviews. The process undertaken had been robust and challenging and had been carried out by sector-led experts.

It was agreed that the Council would undertake a self-assessment using the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC), risk awareness tool which had been launched by the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in October 2015. Quality assurance of the self-assessment was then undertaken by two independent adult social care and health consultants. In addition to this, an OFSTED inspection, which would review the LAT, was expected to be carried out shortly.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Young People commended officers for the work undertaken in establishing the People Directorate and its achievements to date.

The Chair stated that the Committee were not best placed to assess the new arrangements in the People Services Directorate. In his view, the Directorate would benefit from further professional scrutiny in the form of a follow-up LAT Review in two years' time, to ensure that the service continued to be robust and safe. He proposed that a Recommendation be sent to Cabinet to this effect. This was agreed by the Committee.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

That a follow-up Local Assurance Test (LAT) of the People Directorate be undertaken in 2018.

RESOLVED ITEMS

177. Implementation of new Youth Offending Case Management System

The Committee considered a report which set out the issues that arose following the implementation of the new Youth Offending Case management system. It considered the impact of the system implementation on the Youth Offending Team (YOT) practice and performance and recorded lessons learned for those involved in the project.

Members asked the following questions and officers responded accordingly:

- It was clear from the officer report that the new software had been implemented too quickly and that the overall process of replacing the Case Management System should have been initiated much sooner. What assurance could be given that in the future, any IT upgrades and replacements would be managed in a timely and effective manner with sufficient contingency built in?
- A number of other IT systems in use in the Council were reaching or had reached 'end of life' and were giving rise to performance issues. How could the overall process of replacing these be improved on a council wide level?
- The Youth Offending Information System (YOIS) had first been identified for replacement in 2012 – had this initial upgrade adhered to set timescales or had it been delayed? Were current timescales for implementation being met?
- Did the Youth Offending Team (YOT) continue to experience problems and delays with "Connectivity" (the software which provides a secure connection with the YJB and other YOTs)?
- Why were there problems with Connectivity? Was this an internal or external issue and what was being done to resolve it?
- How long had the gap in performance reporting been?
- What action had been taken following guidance from Corporate IT that contracts with vendors should tie up so that there was clearer identification of implementation responsibilities?
- How long would it take for the new Case Management System to be fully functional?
- How had difficulties with the implementation of the new software impacted on staff morale and their ability to carry out their responsibilities?
- Would it be advisable for the implementation process to be overseen by an external body?

Delays in implementation following the initial inspection and the decision to implement a new system in 2012 had been caused by a number of factors, namely:

- co-ordinating the project with other important work in the YOT;
- the fact that the date of implementation was close to the date of the change in IT provider;
- ambitious timescales and the need to allow more time for testing and improvement prior to going live.

This situation had been continuously monitored at monthly Board meetings, and an action plan was put in place to resolve the significant issues that remained. The action plan was completed at May 2016. In the meanwhile, the YOT team continued to work closely with Corporate IT and the new IT supplier to monitor the situation.

Joint working with the new IT supplier, Sopra Steria, had led to improvements, however, the outdated IT infrastructure continued to cause problems with the system. Most of the issues experienced by the YOT team had now been resolved, and it was anticipated that there would be significant further improvements by the end of 2016 once the Citrix and browser upgrades, which were planned for October/November 2016, had been implemented.

The initial implementation plan had been put in place following the inspection in 2012, however, the continuing implementation of the post 2012 inspection improvement plan when the Board decided that no system change should be carried out until the team's performance against key indicators improved significantly, had also led to delays.

Capita One had advised that Connectivity problems were not unique to Harrow and that connectivity would improve with each new release of the system. Information from YJB suggests that around a third of YOT teams around the UK were experiencing similar issues. Connectivity had been down again recently and continued to be prone to error messages and downtime. There were contingency plans in place to deal with this. Connectivity problems had been reported to the Youth Justice Board.

Staff morale and their ability to carry out their responsibilities had been impacted by the system issues, as had managers' ability to effectively manage and support their staff. However, this was a matter of collective responsibility by the People Directorate, IT and Business Intelligence, not simply the YOT.

The new system went live in September 2015 and the first reliable information had been available in January 2016. Managers had been obliged to work manually to achieve timescales relating to performance reporting.

Following a recommendation from the Corporate IT team, an end-to-end review of the system had been undertaken. This had led to some improvements in system stability and a reduction in access problems, however, the system continued to be slow.

The new national 'Assetplus' workflow which was due to be introduced from October onwards would be accompanied by significant changes to the set of operational indicators. Any future upgrades would be planned jointly with Corporate IT and Sopra Steria. The importance of receiving appropriate advice and guidance from Corporate IT in identifying problems and finding collective resolutions would be vital to the success of any such project in the future.

The Chair asked the officers presenting the report to keep the relevant Performance and Policy Lead Members apprised of any updates. He also requested that a report of IT Governance across all Council departments should be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. This was agreed unanimously by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

178. Adults Services Complaints Annual Report (social care only) 2015/16 and Children and Families Services Complaints Annual Report 2015/16; Children and Families Services Complaints Annual Report 2015/16

The Committee considered the report which set out the statutory Adults Services Complaints Annual report and the report of the Children and Families Services Complaints Annual report, together.

It was noted that paragraph 8, on page 94 had been included in the report in error.

Members asked the following questions, which were responded to accordingly:

- What was the nature of the complaints which had been escalated to stages 2 and 3?
- Both reports cited staff conduct (attitude & behaviour) as reasons for some of the complaints received. What had been done to address this?
- What was the reason for the high level of MP and Councillor enquiries managed by the Complaints Team?
- What was being done to ensure complaints did not get referred on the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)?

The nature and complexity of complaints varied. In some cases, it could be said that these were not complaints in the formal sense, but often turned out to be complex queries or even a cry for help. Many of these were resolved through timely early intervention. For a stage 1 complaint, officers would meet and have discussions with the service user or carer in question, to ascertain what the issues were and what outcome was desired by the complainant. It was important to note that a large number of complaints were resolved early or withdrawn.

In the case of Adults, a stage 2 complaint would be referred on to a senior manager for further investigation. The Children's Act required stage 2 complaints to be looked at by an independent investigator. Stage 3 complaints related exclusively to children's services complaints, which required the setting up of a complaints Review Panel.

The disproportionately large number of complaints against staff, were investigated, and very few found in favour of the client or complainant. Many of these related to unfavourable news (such as a child being removed from the family home), or a service not being provided. In cases where the staff had been found to be at fault, additional supervision was put in place and further training undertaken by the staff member.

Although the number of representations made by MPs and Councillors had reduced for Children's Services this was not the case for Adults. This may be because the residents were increasingly confident about consulting their MPs and Councillors. These cases were often more complex. An officer undertook to look into this and provide further information about the nature of these complaints to Members after the meeting.

Managing clients' expectations was a key aspect in reducing the number of complaints being registered. In the cases referred to the LGO, although mediation and officer meetings were offered, the clients did not take up the offer.

The Committee requested that in the future draft copies of all reports being considered by the Committee should be sent to both the relevant Scrutiny Lead Member and the Scrutiny Performance Member ahead of the agenda being published.

The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Older People congratulated officers for their work in dealing with complaints across both Adults and Children's sections. He added that the proportion of complaints received in relation to the large number of clients and the volume of transactions undertaken by the Directorate, was extremely favourable. He also drew the Committee's attention to the compliments received by both sections.

RESOLVED: That both reports be noted.

179. Draft Scope for Homelessness Scrutiny Challenge Panel

The Committee considered a report which set out the draft scope for the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on homelessness and to agree either option A or B set out in the officer report.

The Policy Lead Member for Environment and Enterprise, who had chaired the Scrutiny Leadership Group (SLG) meeting, advised that:

- the timelines for the two Challenge Panels had yet to be agreed by SLG;
- the availability or lack of housing stock was a major contributing factor to the current levels of homelessness in the borough and this needed to be looked at by the Challenge Panel;

- SLG considered that the remit was too wide to be undertaken in any depth by a single Challenge Panel, therefore, two Panels had been proposed.

A Member, who was not a Member of the Committee made the following points:

- it was vital that the Challenge Panel consider issues of supply and demand in to relation housing;
- whether the measures being implemented by the Housing Department were in fact tackling the issue of homelessness;
- undertaking two challenge panels on the same topic would not be an effective use of limited time and resources.

Following a proposal from the Chair, it was agreed that in the first instance, option A be agreed and that the Committee request the Chair and Vice Chair to modify the scope of the Challenge Panel at later date, should it prove necessary.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) option A be implemented;
- (2) the need for a second Challenge (option B) be further considered at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Group;
- (3) the Chair of the Review be Councillor Jeff Anderson;
- (4) the timing of this Challenge Panel, its membership and associated reporting arrangements be agreed at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Group.

180. Termination of Meeting

In accordance with the provisions of rule 14.1 (Part 4B) of the Constitution:

RESOLVED: At 9.59 pm to continue until 10.05 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.05 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR PAUL OSBORN
Vice-Chair in the Chair