

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

11 June 2024

Present:

Chair: Councillor Amir Moshenson

Councillors: Dan Anderson
June Baxter
Govind Bharadia
Graham Henson
Maxine Henson
Samir Sumaria
Antonio Weiss

**In attendance
(Councillors):** Hitesh Karia
For Minute 100

Absent: Harrow Youth Parliament
Representative
Councillor Vipin Mithani
Reverend P Reece
Ms M Trivedi

94. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: That there were no reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

95. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interest made by Members.

96. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024, and the special meeting held on 16 May 2024, be taken as read and signed as correct records.

97. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions had been received.

98. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

99. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that no references had been received.

Recommended Items

100. Information Report - Youth Justice Plan

The Committee received the Youth Justice Plan Report 2024-2027, which provided an outline of how the Local Authority would deliver and finance youth justice services in Harrow. This was in line with the expectation of the legal duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The Committee heard that Harrow Youth Justice Service had met outcomes and delivered positively against national indicators with regard to: reducing first time entrants into the criminal justice system; reducing re-offending by children and young people; and reducing the use of custody for children.

In the discussion that ensued, the Committee raised the following comments and asked questions:

- It would be difficult to judge the performance of the Youth Justice Service without performance indicators and questioned when these would be released by the Youth Justice Board. The Committee were informed that it was not known when the performance indicators would be released as the process was controlled by the Youth Justice Board. This was a national issue, and not unique to Harrow. It was a complex, multifaceted process, which relied on data from other partners as well. The issue was raised at every opportunity with the Youth Justice Board;
- Members questioned the risk in relation to transitioning information technology (IT) services and were informed that there was a dedicated team working on the IT transition, and risk mitigating measures included testing and training. It was envisaged that challenges would be resolved before the transition was effected;

- Citing pages 28 and 29 of the Plan, it was observed that the Service was now staffed by two Police Constables (PCs), whilst there was only one the previous year. The Committee were informed that, in terms of the difference to service delivery, the addition of one extra PC had brought numerous positive changes, such as reduction in re-offending, and more support to victims. Furthermore, the PCs were able to attend school assemblies more frequently, and give talks to young persons. This had given schools confidence that their young persons were better supported to prevent crime before it started;
- Whilst the Plan provided a positive picture on the reduction in youth offending, it could be observed from Councillors' communication with communities that youth offending in Harrow was getting worse. This could also be attributed to the reduced number of social workers dedicated to the youth. The Committee were informed that the data on the reduced number of youth offences was obtained from the Police, which was a more accurate presentation of statistics. However, certain "hotspots" in the borough, such as Harrow Bus Station, continued to have high incidents of youth crime recorded;
- Members asked what additional support for youth mental health and child sexual exploitation was being given when there were budgetary constraints. They were informed that the Council actually contributed the largest sum to the budget for youth services in the borough, which showed the Administration's commitment to youth programmes. Furthermore, the Police contribution ensured that preventative measures were embedded within their resources. This led to improved outcomes for victims;
- In response to a question about the assistance given to young adults after the age of 18, as it was proven that resources dwindled after that age, the Committee were informed that whilst there was a difference in the support given to post-18 young persons, there were dedicated Probation Officers who managed the transition until they turned 25-years-old. As Harrow did not have many cases to manage, it meant there was adequate support for youths after turning 18-years-old.

The Committee requested that, where reasonably available, more detailed data on outcomes of programmes be made available, including waiting times on key services, such as, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

RESOLVED: That the comments of the Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

101. Information Report - Housing Improvement and Regulatory Changes

The Committee received the Housing Regulation Report, which set out changes to the regulation of registered providers of social housing by the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman. The report also provided an update on the Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures for 2023/2024 and the Housing Complaints Performance for 2023/2024.

In the discussion that ensued, the Committee made comments and asked the following questions:

- The rate of satisfaction on how complaints were handled hovered around 50% to 60% and Members questioned whether this was a good statistic. The Committee were informed that Harrow was benchmarked against other local authorities nationally, and in London. However, there was room for improvement in handling complaints to ensure that more service-users were satisfied with the level of complaint handling;
- In response to a question, the Committee were informed that the benchmarking data would be available in the Autumn, but it would not be ranked;
- There was a requirement for housing officers to hold certain qualification, according to new Government regulations, and it was questioned how this would impact on Harrow. The Committee were informed that this applied to officers with managerial responsibility, and that some officers in Harrow already held the requisite qualifications;
- Data on engagement with residents' and tenants' association should be included in the satisfaction measures in order for Members to appreciate the full picture.

The Committee requested that data on engagement with residents' and tenants' association should be included in future Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Housing Complaints Performance Reports.

RESOLVED: That the comments of the Committee be noted, and referred to Cabinet for consideration for its response as the Governing Body, in relation to the Housing Complaints Report 2023/2024 (Appendix 2), which would be published on the Council's website as part of the new statutory requirement and submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 8.49 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Amir Moshenson
Chair