

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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<b>Date:</b>	20 September 2012
<b>Subject:</b>	Scrutiny Lead Member Report
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member area:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cllr Sue Anderson, Performance Lead, Environment and Enterprise</li><li>• Cllr Stephen Wright, Policy Lead, Environment and Enterprise</li></ul>
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

The report accompanies the reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is requested to consider the reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members and agree the actions proposed therein.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

This report outlines details of the work of the Scrutiny Lead Members.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report

### **Performance Issues**

There are no performance issues associated with this report.

### **Environmental Impact**

There is no environmental impact associated with this report

### **Risk Management Implications**

There are no risks associated with this report.

### **Equalities implications**

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

This report outlines the activities of the scrutiny lead councillors; it makes no proposals to change service delivery.

### **Corporate Priorities**

The Scrutiny Lead Members' responsibilities cover all areas of the council's activity.

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Not required for this report.

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background**

### **Papers**

**Contact:** Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 8420 9387, [lynne.margetts@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.margetts@harrow.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:** None

## **SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT: ENVIRONMENT AND ENTERPRISE**

**16 JULY 2012**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES BRIEFING**

#### **Attendees**

Councillor Sue Anderson, Scrutiny Performance Lead, E&E  
Councillor Stephen Wright, Scrutiny Policy Lead, E&E  
John Edwards, Divisional Director, Environmental Services  
Anu Singh, Directorate Development, Environmental Services  
Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer

#### **NOTES**

##### **1. Introduction**

Members had been provided in advance of the meeting with a copy of the service plan for the directorate. The performance lead requested that the leads be provided with the updated performance measures including the performance data for quarter 1.

##### **2. Recycling**

The Director reported that the level of recycling appears to be plateauing and this is in keeping with the performance in other authorities. The council achieved a recycling rate of 26% prior to the introduction of the three bin system; current performance is 48%, having reached just over 50% last year.

Performance also tends to be seasonal, with higher performance in quarters 1 and 2. Recycling is measured by weight and includes green waste. This also means that, for example, that at Christmas if extra packaging is properly sorted this can boost performance.

It is cheaper to dispose of recyclables rather than residual waste; the council pays for the residual waste to be disposed of.

There is also a slight change in emphasis to waste minimisation and thereby avoiding landfill. There is a feeling that recycling needs another shot in the arm. There is also a policy debate nationally on whether incentives are effective.

Members requested performance data and trends for recycling.

##### **3. Highways contract**

Members were advised that the contract with May Gurney is producing savings and that the TUPE transfers have been conducted smoothly. Savings of £400k have been achieved by letting the contract. The contractor has also taken up occupation of the Depot.

##### **4. Carbon Reduction Commitment**

The policy lead asked whether the RE:FIT project was on target and whether it would be achieved. The Director advised that the project had worked reasonably well but the challenge had been on the school side because they are required to make a commitment upfront and have faith that the savings to energy bills will cover the cost of the improvements.

Future schemes will probably take a different format. There is a financial incentive for the council for such initiatives because of the tax on carbon use.

The Green Deal is pitched at three levels; full engagement would require investment that the council probably would not feel that it could afford. Energy companies also have targets but are struggling to meet these, possibly because energy customers are suspicious of the deals on offer.

The main challenge with climate change is the problem of adopting a cross-directorate approach; it needs to be embedded into other directorates' projects.

#### **5. Street lighting**

Street lighting has been an area for debate and the council has consulted on residents' appetite for dimming, trimming or turning off lights overnight. There was little appetite at all for these measures, which was a surprise as a more polarised view had been expected.

The proposal is to introduce LED lighting. While more expensive initially, they are cheaper to run and require a lower level of maintenance. Where they have been introduced there have been some complaints that the streets are over lit; in actual fact the light is a lower but whiter light. This could offer the opportunity to further lower light levels if this is how LED lighting is perceived.

Some concrete columns have now exceeded their life expectancy of 30 years; some, however have been found more sound than steel columns (life expectancy of 25 years). The concrete columns are likely to be the focus for the next year. There is a case for reviewing the lampposts on a post by post basis. There is a rolling programme of replacement; as the LED lights are more expensive, progress is therefore slower.

The council is not considering a borough-wide control system yet and is focusing on the technology within each individual post.

While the council did previously succeed in a PFI bid a few years ago the main issue was the 'affordable gap'; it would take 25 years to pay back the investment, though replacement would be delivered far faster. It was felt that the project did not have the highest priority for the council.

#### **6. Public realm/Access Harrow**

The Director reported that this project had been successfully delivered in 2011/12. Savings made had not impacted on service delivery and some of the previous issues around recording had actually been addressed as a result.

The next step will be to develop a web portal to display reported problems on a map. This would enable the council to demonstrate that problems had been addressed.

#### **7. Mobile and flexible working**

This is a cross-council project that is part of the Transformation 2 programme. A related project for the directorate is on-street services to allow staff to report issues without having to return to base.

#### **8. Affordable warmth and fuel poverty**

The Director reported that these areas are linked to the housing strategy and that a strategic approach had been adopted to identify the priority zone. It is also an issue for the council's own social housing stock. It is also linked to the Green Deal, which includes initiatives to reduce energy bills. The council can also work with energy companies to help identify households and lever resources.

## **9. Weeks of Action**

It is intended that there is a change in approach to the weeks of action so that the council is seen to work *with* local communities to address problem areas rather than for them. The intention is to overcome limited community involvement in the weeks of action – in the past communities have assumed that the council will do the work. The council has also begun to challenge the Neighbourhood Champions to be more open about their presence so that they can be approached by their neighbours.

This pointed to the need for a wider debate with regard to behaviour change, as well as the council's policy approach; for example the council has never issued a notice for littering.

## **10. Emerging issues**

The major emerging issue is budget pressure. The directorate has is reaching the end of savings that can be achieved through efficiency and is moving towards service reduction/divestment. The directorate is starting to develop a view on what is essential versus nice to have.

## **11. Other matters**

The following other matters were discussed:

- Courtfield Avenue – lack of communication about delayed work to potholes – the performance lead stressed that it was important that officers provide councillors and residents with updates if works were to be delayed.
- Freight traffic – plans are not fully implemented yet but the council is in contact with other boroughs with regard to freight flows
- Legionella – following the outbreak in Scotland cooling towers in Harrow had been re-checked and no problems identified.
- A Blue River Network is being developed London-wide to expand river walks.
- IPADs – 97% are now complete within the directorate
- Free tips for vans at the civic amenity site – there were concerns that commercial waste is being tipped as domestic waste. Some authorities have a policy of not permitting vans. There are no firm proposals at this stage.

## **12. Next steps – FOR ACTION**

That the Leads be provided with:

- The updated directorate scorecard
- Data and trends for recycling performance

That the Leads Members receive:

- A briefing on parking charges.
- A demonstration of the public realm service in Access Harrow

**A meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 19 September with the Corporate Director, Place Shaping.**