

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date:	24 th October 2012
Subject:	Scrutiny Lead Member Report
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Jerry Miles, Policy Lead, Resources• Cllr Tony Ferrari, Performance Lead, Resources• Cllr Zarina Khalid, Policy Lead, Children and Families• Cllr Christine Bednell, Performance Lead, Children and Families• Cllr Stephen Wright, Policy Lead, Environment and Enterprise• Cllr Sue Anderson, Performance Lead, Environment and Enterprise
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	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

Background Papers: None

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT: **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

17th September 2012

Attendees

Cllr Christine Bednell, Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children and Families; Leora Cruddas, Divisional Manager, Quality Assurance & Service Improvement; Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

Service Plan Priorities

The councillors had been provided with a copy of Children and Families Services Directorate service plan. The purpose of the meeting was to identify potential issues for scrutiny consideration for the remainder of the current administration.

The Corporate Director emphasised her view that the work which had begun prior to the Ofsted inspection with regard to safeguarding children should continue. She felt that this is an area of particular concern to the council. Following the outcome of the Ofsted inspection, there have been improvements in children's services, however, there are still areas of concern and she welcomed scrutiny's support in delivering further improvements.

The Divisional Director will send the most up to date version of the Ofsted improvement plan to the scrutiny team. However, in discussion it emerged that given that the Ofsted safeguarding framework had been significantly strengthened, that this should be used as the basis of scrutiny's approach to this work, but perhaps focussing on specific components of a child/young person's experience of the safeguarding system and benchmarking with the best performers. The Divisional Director suggested that following the 'Child's Journey' as identified by the Munro Review might provide a specific focus. The following areas were suggested;

- Early intervention
- Access to the services
- Youth Offending

All of these services have a profound impact on the overall success of a safeguarding system

For Action:

It was agreed that the Children's Leads will meet to discuss further a scope for the consideration of the council's safeguarding services and that this will be presented to the Scrutiny Leadership Group for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme.

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT: RESOURCES

12TH September 2012

Attendees

Cllr Jerry Miles, Policy Lead Member, Resources: Cllr Tony Ferrari, Performance Lead Member Resources; Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

Debt Recovery

The Divisional Director Collections and Benefits had provided the lead members with a written update on the implementation of the recommendations from the Debt Recovery challenge panel which took place at the end of 2011. Having considered this response, the lead members remain concerned that the proposals included in the response, whilst supporting the council to develop a unified and strategic approach to the recovery of debts, do not address the key issue from the panel: the establishment of a process prior to the implementation of bankruptcy proceedings to identify vulnerable residents. Subsequent discussions have clarified that a process for this is currently under development. The lead members will seek an opportunity to comment on this process during its development and propose the deferral of the 6-monthly update to P&F to the April meeting of the committee.

For Action:

The lead members will seek further information with regard to the establishment of a process prior to the implementation of bankruptcy proceedings to identify vulnerable residents.

Schools Place Planning

Cllr Ferrari had met with officers to consider how demographic information is used by the council to secure sufficient school places. There have been a number of problems with the calculation of the number of children who require places which have resulted in the need for 'bulge' classes. Officers were able to explain what action has been taken to secure a more accurate picture of the number of children requiring places as a result of more detailed interrogation of projections information and similar interrogation will take place when the results of the 2011 Census are made available in January 2013.

Cllr Ferrari remains concerned with regard to the number of school places available going forward and a further meeting with the Head of Service-Education Strategy & School Organisation will be requested.

For Action

Further meeting to discuss the implications of demographic changes on the school place capacity to be scheduled once the Census 2011 and associated GLA projections are available – January. Meeting with schools place planning officers to be scheduled to discuss the implications in February.

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

19 SEPTEMBER 2012 – PLACE SHAPING BRIEFING

Attendees

- Councillor Sue Anderson, Scrutiny Performance Lead, E&E
- Councillor Stephen Wright, Scrutiny Policy Lead, E&E
- Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director, Place Shaping
- Mark Billington, Head of Economic Development and Research
- Phil Greenwood, Head of Major Development Projects [part]
- Phil Loveland-Cooper, Head of Corporate Estate [part]
- Andy Parsons, Head of Service, Business Management [part]
- Les Simpson, Senior Professional, Business Management
- Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer

Apologies were received from Stephen Kelly, Divisional Director, Planning.

NOTES

1. Introduction

Members had been provided in advance of the meeting with a copy of the service plan for the directorate. The Members were provided with an updated copy of the quarterly directorate scorecard, which included performance at quarter 1.

2. Discussion

Directorate scorecard

Members reviewed the scorecard alongside the service plan. The Corporate Director advised that the merger of the directorate with Environmental Services will be significantly influenced by commissioning panels.

The Corporate Director stressed that the scorecard should be viewed as a snapshot of overall performance, intended to provide at a glance – Members could then ask for further performance as they saw fit.

Mobile and flexible working

The Corporate Director advised that the project has received Cabinet approval and is now in the implementation phase. A project manager has been appointed. The project is being rolled out in conjunction with IT; it is dependent on the establishment of the Sharepoint software before implementation in the business. This is likely to be in April 2013.

The delay is related to the wide range of other IT initiatives that are also being implemented, including upgrades and the introduction of PRISM in public realm.

Neighbourhood planning

Members were advised that one group has expressed interest in neighbourhood planning. Representatives from the Stanmore Society met

with the Corporate Director, Divisional Director, Planning and a representative of Legal. The society will need to decide if it wishes to apply. Government subsidy is available to councils to support the costs of supporting neighbourhood planning.

A Member asked whether any efforts had been made to encourage other groups to apply. While no specific efforts had been made, the council had many pre-existing links with established local groups. Neighbourhood planning was in effect aimed outside London where groups such as parish councils could take on the role.

Corporate Estate

Members were advised that reporting against *Rent arrears for current tenants as a % of rental income* is an annualised projection of the outturn. Performance throughout the year is therefore affected by when payments are received. Some tenants are billed quarterly (a legal requirement) but have an informal arrangement with the council to pay on a monthly basis, which distorts arrears. The policy lead Member suggested that the target should be to collect 100% of arrears; the Head of Service responded that the team aimed for this, but that in practice a 95% target had been selected as a realistic goal.

Budget Overview 2012/13

Members were advised that within the service plan, directorate income is given as a budget figure, profiled in quarters. Income is monitored weekly. Income relates to real cash (from building control and development management services) along with a subsidy to cover the activities of the department. If cash income falls agency spend can be reduced. The business area is becoming more difficult; the impact of policy changes such as the definition of permitted development is not clear.

Unemployment

The Head of Economic Development and Research advised that the purpose of the target to *Increase the percentage difference between Harrow and the rest of London in respect of JSA [Job Seekers Allowance] claims* is to highlight Harrow's performance against the rest of London, in terms of assessing the impact of local initiatives to improve levels of employment. Alternatives would be to measure the number of individuals completing specific projects but this would provide little information about the impact.

Members were advised that further funding has been secured for the construction training initiative. Thirty young people have participated in the Xcite programme for unemployed graduates, undertaking placements in the public and voluntary sectors. So far more than half of the unemployed graduates have gone on to secure permanent jobs. It is beneficial to target this group as they are not eligible for apprenticeship schemes because of the qualification level that they have achieved. The apprenticeships scheme will be dependent on opportunities materialising.

Vitality profile

The production of the profile will ultimately depend on the release of the census data from 2011. The census data has confirmed the increase in population in the borough.

The Policy Lead member enquired as to whether the census would have any impact of the development of the Kodak site. The Corporate Director responded that decisions in relation to the site would be driven the Core Strategy and DPDs (Development Plan Documents). All had also been subject to extensive consultation, examination in public and professional scrutiny.

Community engagement

A Member asked for further clarification of the activities of the department in reaching the 'hard to hear'. The Corporate Director responded that there had been engagement with these groups in developing the DPDs. Prior to that, consultation on the supplementary planning document on lifetime homes had specifically engaged with voluntary sector disability groups. The Member responded that this did not necessarily reach those not engaged in groups, but conceded that the council does not have an extensive community development function. The Corporate Director added that each planning application offered residents the opportunity to engage with the council should they want to.

Harrow residents' card

A Member raised the issue of the impact of current parking policies on district centres, particularly areas such as Pinner, which border which borders Hillingdon. This borough issues a card that offers parking concessions to local residents such as the first thirty minutes' parking free of charge. It also can be used as a library, leisure and shopping discount card. The Head of Economic Development and Research advised that proposals for a Harrow card are being developed, which includes discussions with Bracknell Forest, who hold the licence for the technology.

The Head of Economic Development and Research advised that proposals for a Harrow card are being developed, which includes discussions with Bracknell Forest, who hold the licence for the technology. He added that although there are some exceptions, in general the vacancy rate in Harrow is falling. In the future retail centres may need to adopt a greater leisure/hospitality focus, in the context of the growth of the internet for retail shopping.

A parking review has been undertaken but focused on zoning for charging rather than commercial issues and yield. For a smart card system to work, the full parking infrastructure would need to be replaced, which would involve capital and revenue costs. Car journeys have been falling as a result of improvements to public transport; there has been some modal shift. Requirements for on/off road parking would vary across the borough; any free parking period would have an impact on yield.

With regard to parking enforcement, it was noted that there are 14 parking enforcement officers for the whole borough.

3. Next steps – FOR ACTION

- That the Leads receive a briefing on the development of proposals for the Harrow card, to include the scope of the project and the objectives referred to at the meeting as well as an indication of the likely next steps.
(Action – Place Shaping)
- That the Leads meet with the new Corporate Director for Environment and Enterprise on commencement of her employment with the Council
(Action – Scrutiny)