

REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 26th February 2013

Subject: Scrutiny Lead Member Report

Responsible Officer: Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director,
Strategic Commissioning

Scrutiny Lead Member area:

- Cllr Zarina Khalid, Performance Lead, Children and Families
- Cllr Christine Bednell, Policy Lead, Children and Families
- Cllr Chris Mote, Polict Lead, Community Health and Well Being
- Cllr Nana Asante, Performance Lead, Community Health and Well Being
- Cllr Jerry Miles, Policy Lead, Resources
- Cllr Tony Ferrari, Performance Lead, Resources

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.

During the period covered by this report, the scrutiny lead members for Environment and Enterprise have also met and have considered in detail the proposals included in the Climate Change and Action Plan and Delivering Warmer Homes strategy. A report of their deliberations is included elsewhere on this agenda.

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

11th DECEMBER 2012

Attendees

Cllr Christine Bednell; Cllr Zarina Khalid; Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children and Families; Leora Cruddas, Divisional Manager, Quality Assurance & Service Improvement; Nick Crick, Service Manager, Children Looked After; Andreas Kyriacou, Quality Assurance Manager, Vulnerable Children; Debbie Owen, Senior Co-ordinator, Practice and Performance, Children Looked After; Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

Apologies

Kamini Rambellas, Interim Divisional Director, Targeted Services

Child's Journey Through Care

The group discussed how the proposed project to consider a child's journey through the care system might be undertaken. It was suggested that the project group receives a presentation on a real case and how this has progressed through the system – the service has undergone a number of audit/reflective processes of late and an example of good practice in the borough might be used as a case study. It was also agreed that, in order to challenge the services performance and identify any potential gaps, this case study would be considered in the context of alternative incidents i.e. 'what ifs' and wild cards. Lynne and Debbie will meet to develop a methodology for consideration by the review group. Leora also provided the councillors with a document produced by the Children's Improvement Board outlining 'what good looks like' in terms of services for children, this can also provide a benchmark against which to measure the council's performance.

Councillors also wished to understand, not just the child's journey through the care system but also how the council or other professionals identify a child who needs support and how these children are able to access the system.

Catherine suggested that the councillors may wish to observe some of the children's social work activity – case conferences for example. Lynne will arrange this. Case documentation on any cases chosen for consideration as part of the project will also be provided.

It was agreed that the project will take place in February next year.

For Action

- Scrutiny Manager to meet with Senior Co-ordinator, Practice and Performance, Children Looked After to discuss methodology
- Scrutiny Manager to liaise with councillors re observing social work case meetings
- Documentation re selected cases to be forwarded to Scrutiny Manager once identified.
- Officers committed to providing councillors with a detailed briefing on foster care.

Consolidating work in Children's Services

Scrutiny councillors are currently considering a number of areas of children's services and would like to co-ordinate this work. It was agreed that monthly meetings between the Children and Families scrutiny leads and the Corporate Director and members of her management team would be set up and these meetings will consider the range of issues currently under review. Rather than hold an additional meeting with the other councillors who have interests in this area, they will also be invited to attend the monthly meetings – These councillors to include, Cllrs Osborn, Anderson and Macleod-Cullinane.

Catherine commented that she welcomes the challenge which has come from the scrutiny members in this regard.

A number of points were raised:

Catherine advised that a personnel investigation into the YOT is underway. She will advise members of the outcomes of this investigation. Councillors asked who they should speak to if they wish to discuss any aspect of progress in terms of delivery of the improvement plan for YOT. Officers advised that, in order to ensure accountability for and ownership of improvement proposals, front line officers had been identified in the improvement plan. However, for strategic oversight of improvement, Kamini Rambellas, Interim Divisional Director, Targeted Services, should be contacted.

Youth Justice Board will carry out a 'mock inspection' in the New Year

Members requested a structure chart of children's services

Cllr Khalid asked whether counselling services are available for Children Looked After. Officers advised that formal counselling isn't always necessary but that the council has Service Level Agreements with a number of organisations. It was pointed out that some of the less formal services are more beneficial as the most troubled young people might be less willing to engage with formal counselling. Nick and Andreas will provide a briefing for councillors on the services which are available for young people in care.

YISP = Youth Inclusion Support Programme

Peer review of social work practice had taken place in week commencing 3rd December

For Action

- Scrutiny Manager to confirm arrangements for monitoring performance in Children and Families Services with Scrutiny Leadership Group
- Service Manager, Children Looked After and Quality Assurance Manager, Vulnerable Children to provide a briefing for councillors on the counselling services available to young people.

Budget

Catherine advised that whilst all of the improvements identified in the Ofsted inspection and the impact of demographic pressures had been addressed in the budget, Children's Services has still been required to make a number of

savings, some of which may attract negative comment from Ofsted. She commented that the risk has been mitigated as far as possible and that in order to maximise savings, the service is looking to cross-borough and procurement opportunities – it is worth noting that the Ofsted inspection had commented on the robustness of the New Operating Model in Children's Services, which it regards as 'future proof'

Date of Next Meeting

The next briefing will take place on:

29th January, 2-3 pm in the Children's Services Boardroom

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

29TH JANUARY 2013

Attendees

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

Youth Offending Team Update

Catherine updated the lead councillors on the delivery of the YOT inspection improvement plan.

The service has experienced significant difficulties in recent years and although there has been some good work, the YOT inspection found that some processes have been poor. The Corporate Director advised that she has been dealing with a number of staffing/disciplinary issues in the team and an independent report on some of these issues has been commissioned and completed and will be shared with staff in the near future.

The Corporate Director advised that there is now an excellent manager in place and the location of the service in early intervention team as a part of the New Operating Model had made a significant improvement in performance.

The Corporate Director and the Divisional Director highlighted that some of the HR procedures were drawn out.

The improvement plan has been monitored via the YOT improvement board on a monthly basis but this board has now been merged with the Management Board. The Management Board meets quarterly and will continue the monitoring process, the next meeting of the merged board is on 8th February and this meeting will decide on the frequency of meetings for the future.

Melissa Caslake will be joining Children and Families as Divisional Director Targeted Services as permanent replacement for Interim Director Kamini Rambellas.

For Action

- Leads to continue to seek updates on the delivery of the YOT improvement plan

Children and Families Managing Change Framework Document

The Corporate Director introduced this document which provides the framework within which the new operating model can be reviewed within the context of the delivery of the MTFs, growth funding and the ongoing changes in service delivery – YOT, new front door. The document outlines the consultation process which will be used in any proposed service changes.

Child's Journey

The Divisional Manager advised the lead members of changes to the Ofsted inspection regime. The existing inspection of Safeguarding and Children Looked After has been replaced by two separate regimes: Child Protection – equating to safeguarding – and looked after children. Ofsted have published the framework for the protection of children inspections. These are significantly more challenging than the previous framework. All authorities previously rated as 'adequate' are likely to be inspected under this new regime in the near future. This may include Harrow, however, as the inspection undertaken last year, which although done under the previous regime, was undertaken to a more stringent standard. The new regime will be completely unannounced.

The new regime will consider the effectiveness of local authorities' leadership of strategic partnerships in protecting children. 23 authorities have been inspected under this regime, 3 have been rated as 'good', 12 as 'adequate' and 8 'inadequate' – of these 8, 6 were previously rated as 'adequate'. The Divisional Manager will provide the leads with information with regard to how many of these were London authorities.

In May a further new framework for the inspection of child protection services will be introduced. This will be a multi-agency inspection of local authority, health, police and probation services engaged in child protection services. It will be a joint inspection undertaken by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation

The Divisional Manager commented that whilst the service is aware of the likelihood of inspection, it is focusing its effort on improving a child's journey through the child protection service. In this context she stressed the importance of identifying a *council* perspective of what a 'good' child protection service looks like rather than simply focusing on the definitions offered by the inspection regime. She provided the lead councillors with a document which has been circulated to the 'strategic group' which reflects the work undertaken by the Local Government Association's Children's Improvement Board. It was agreed that the work being undertaken by scrutiny re 'A Child's Journey Through Care' could be very supportive of the services improvement proposals by offering effective challenge. Leora offered to provide the lead members with a definition under each of the headings included in the CIB document and to suggest potential activity which would support scrutiny to challenge the service's improvement journey.

The Divisional Manager clarified that the Strategic Group comprises Corporate Director, Health and Police representative and Local Safeguarding Children Board. She will send the terms of reference to the lead members for their information.

For action

- Divisional Manager to provide details of 23 boroughs inspected under revised child protection inspection regime
- Divisional Manager to provide terms of reference for the strategic group

- Preparatory work on the scrutiny review 'A Child's Journey Through Care' to continue and additional information/definitions to be provided to the review group members.

Date of Next Meeting

26th February, 3.30 – 4.30

To include Cllrs Anderson, Osborn and Macleod-Cullinane

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL BEING SCRUTINY LEADS BRIEFING **28TH JANUARY 2013**

Present

Cllr Nana Asante, Cllr Chris Mote

Lynne Margetts

Mental Health

Further to the discussions at the November leads' briefing, it was confirmed that the Community Health and Well Being leads have been included in the membership on this forthcoming project. It was advised that this is likely to commence in April.

Neighbourhood Incentive Scheme

The leads considered issues which had arisen with regard to the consultation/engagement/involvement which takes place when decisions are being made with regard to use of NIS funds. Specifically, developments which appear to be beneficial may have associated disadvantages for some residents. The leads wish to understand what advice is given to the councillors in deciding how to spend the NIS funds and how to mitigate any resultant tensions from decisions.

For action

Advice to be provided to future meeting of the scrutiny lead councillors with regard to support offered to ward councillors when making decisions re NIS funding

Neighbourhood Champions

The lead councillors are concerned about the ongoing implementation of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme. In particular what happens when a resident who is a Neighbourhood Champion moves house, do they remain as a designated Neighbourhood Champion and entitled to continue from their new address? If so, does this mean there is a residual gap at their old address?

For action

Advice to be sought for the lead councillors re process.

Parks

Whilst parks may fall within the remit of the Environment and Economy leads, the Community Health and Well Being leads are particularly keen to see the parks used for 'health and well being' activities and as communal spaces used by all residents. They are keen to investigate what might need to be done in parks to encourage their use.

For action

Advice to be provided to future meeting of the leads to meet with regard to the activities available in parks and future plans

Harrow People

Leads commented that there appear to be problems with the delivery of Harrow People magazine.

For action

Advice to be sought for the lead councillors with regard to how delivery of the magazine is monitored.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Community Health and Well Being leads will take place on 25th February with the Corporate Director Community Health and Well Being to discuss commissioning panel outcomes and directorate priorities.

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT: RESOURCES

19th DECEMBER 2012

Attendees

Cllr Jerry Miles, Policy Lead Member, Resources
Cllr Tony Ferrari, Performance Lead Member Resources
Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
Fern Silverio, Divisional Director Collections & Benefits
Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

Resources Directorate Commissioning Panel Proposals

Tom advised that the aim had been to identify 15% savings over the next two years and to consider future scenarios to reduce budgets by 25% and 35%. The 15% savings to be consistent with the further 25% and 35% reductions.

Tom outlined a number of issues. A potential issue for Resources is the reduction in the One Stop Shop, the population segments which are increasing are the segments which most prefer face-to-face contact. It is to be proven that proposed reductions in face to face access will be compensated for via online contacts. . There will be a reduction in the phone service for Public Realm services to encourage migration but where this doesn't happen waiting times will increase. Phone line access will be switched off in 2016/17. There may be significant issues for councillors in these circumstances. More intelligent telephony is being introduced to help compensate.

The leads will monitor the impact of the channel migration

Self service machines are also being introduced with the intention of closing down 'face-to-face' in 4 years and computers in kiosks with support will be available. The council will be working closely with the third sector to support residents through this shift. The impact of change proposals for the voluntary sector being made elsewhere in the council will need to be monitored.

Some savings identified in previous years have not been delivered. As such, growth items have been included in the 2013/14 budget and alternative savings to cover these have had to be identified.

There is also a risk in proposals with regard to the data centre. As the council has identified savings through not closing the computer room as per the ITO agreement any system failure which requires the backup system to be implemented will in future be a cost to the council and not to Capita.

The council is pursuing reductions in IT charges through the reduction in users or in buildings. If user numbers fall below 2000 this delivers a significant saving - thus the reduction in numbers to below 2000 has become a target

A new print contract with Xerox will reduce costs from £900k to £300k.

Insurance liability risk is being reduced in a number of ways e.g. by cutting down dangerous trees and not using poor drivers. This is allowing reductions to be made in the insurance pot but the robustness of this will be monitored

Committee Services are expected to lose 2.5 posts and this will be compensated for by identifying different ways of recording meetings, reducing the number of committees

The implementation of the review of corporate finance and changes to the SAP system are critical to the delivery of savings

Discretionary rate relief for charity shops will end

There will be no exemptions from Council Tax for empty properties or for properties undergoing major refurbishment

There are a number of growth pressures

- Undelivered savings
- Helpline income expectations not being realised
- Card payment system update
- Increased resources for payroll as academies opt out
- Increase in number of child protection lawyers
 - 0.5m back into central procurement

For Action

The Resources Leads will monitor the impact of the changes proposed in the commissioning panel papers, particularly the impact of channel migration

Council Tax (CT) Support Scheme

Fern introduced the changes.

It is accepted that there will be some confusion as residents who have not had to pay any CT in the past are now required to pay at least some. The council is launching a significant campaign to highlight the changes and working with voluntary organisations in this regard.

Councillors are concerned that the changes may result in the council pursuing residents already living in difficult situations for very small sums of money, which will be outweighed by the cost of the recovery.

The scheme to be adopted will see the shortfall of £3.8 million which has resulted from the change, being passed to CT recipients of working age. The council is assuming that 70% of this sum will be collected and that £1m will not. If this collection level is not achieved then there will be a further gap in the budget. Further risks include any significant increase in numbers of people claiming benefits or pensioner claimants. The changes mean an extra 7000 people paying an additional £5 per week

Fern advised that there are proposed changes to the debt recovery scheme which will see the bailiffs action on general debt and CT support debt kept separate. In future, more reminders will be sent and text messaging will be used, in line with proposals from the previous scrutiny work, greater cross referencing with housing and social care will be undertaken and debt/budgeting advice will be provided via the CAB. £150k growth is being sought to support this, though the anticipated 4 additional staff may not be sufficient. Bailiffs will be asked to ascertain vulnerability and more female staff will be used. £125 court costs may be weighed against the debt in order to right it off or might be given to bailiffs who will then be asked to waive their costs in order to stop the escalation of debt.

Collection levels will be monitored throughout the year.

It is important that this collection area is kept separate from the general collection - currently 98%

For action

Resources leads will continue to monitor the implementation of the Council Tax Support Scheme, particularly in the context of their existent work around debt recovery

Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed