

Scrutiny Annual Report 2012-2013

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Table of contents

Introduction from the Chair and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee	1
Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	3
Report from Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee	10
Report from the Adult Health and Social Care Lead Members and the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee	14
Leadership Group.....	18
Report from the Children and Families' Leads	20
Report from the Community Health and Well Being Leads	23
Report from the Environment and Enterprise Leads	25
Report from the Resources Leads.....	28
Scrutiny Member Development Activities	30
Report from the Call-In Sub-Committee	32
Conclusion	34
Contact us	34
Appendix One: Satisfaction Survey – Results and Responses	35

Introduction from the Chair and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee

It has been another challenging year for scrutiny. These are very difficult times for the council as the financial climate and resultant cuts in public sector spending mean that the council is forced to cut deeper and deeper into budgets. This is a time when, we must make our most effective contribution to support the authority's service reconfigurations and safeguard the wellbeing of our residents. This means we must target our investigations at the areas of most importance and apply scrutiny processes as effectively as we can in conducting these investigations. In this context, the scrutiny leadership group has continued to provide excellent strategic direction for the overall scrutiny function ensuring that key issues are identified and investigated in the most appropriate manner. We are really pleased with the commitment that our colleagues have made to this group and the positive, non - partisan and constructive way that discussions have taken place in the group. We were grateful for the vote of confidence given to the scrutiny leadership group through the nomination for a LGIU C'lr Awards 'Scrutineer of the Year' award, though we were disappointed not to have been shortlisted. Further information on the Scrutiny Leadership Group's deliberations is provided below.

Our investigations take one of three forms:

- discussions as lead members
- discussions at the committees
- detailed specific project investigations.

Through each of these processes our purpose is to make recommendations to the council's cabinet which can support the organisation to improve the services it offers to residents.

In addition to this, there is a more fundamental purpose to scrutiny and that is to ensure that those who are responsible for making decisions, providing services and spending money in our community are challenged with regard to how they are making these decisions, providing services and spending money. Scrutiny is a vital component of the council's democratic processes and the essential means by which decision-makers can be held to account. Thus in all of our deliberations, our purpose is clear – to make a valued contribution to the council's improvement and accountability processes.

We have continued to meet as the three scrutiny committees – Overview and Scrutiny committee, Performance and Finance sub committee and the Health and Social Care sub committee – and have met with a number of colleagues to discuss specific issues of concern. A report from each of the committees is included later in this annual report. We have been particularly heartened by the way that the Performance and Finance committee is evolving into the driving force behind scrutiny and the robust way in which the committee now considers performance information. We are grateful for the support which has been offered to the sub committee, particularly from the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Performance Team.

The scrutiny leads have also continued to provide the first port of call for scrutiny issues and they are focussing on the key issues of the day for the council. As such, all leads have met with their respective senior manager and portfolio holder to discuss the services' priorities for the year. In this way, we hope that the limited resources which are available to us are really focussing in on the issues which matter most to residents and to the council and our partners.

There have been a number of circumstances this year when we have stepped outside of our normal ways of working to try to ensure more cross cutting consideration of particular issues. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee, Performance and Finance sub committee and relevant lead councillors have met to consider the attendance and achievement of Children Looked After, the delivery of the improvement plans following both the Youth Offending and Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspections and the development of a suite of indicators with regard to crime and community safety. It is gratifying to see that our scrutiny processes are sufficiently flexible to allow us to consider these difficult issues in the most appropriate way.

We continue to ensure that there are no surprises in terms of scrutiny activity. We meet on a quarterly basis with both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to ensure that any problems can be discussed at the highest level in the organisation. These discussions have proved extremely helpful in clarifying the Executive and Scrutiny perspectives on a number of issues and in identifying appropriate solutions. A key issue for resolution this year has been scrutiny access to information and we'd like to thank the Leader, Chief Executive and the Director of Legal and Governance Services for helping to resolve these difficulties. Our scrutiny team also ensures that senior managers are updated on our current and planned activities, which has smoothed any potential wrinkles in our interactions.

The pages that follow provide more detail with regard to the specific activities of scrutiny during this municipal year. We hope you find the report interesting.



Cllr Jerry Miles
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Paul Osborn
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Our Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny committee has continued to meet during 2012/13. At the beginning of the year we welcomed Cllr Krishna James, who became the policy lead member for health and social care, and chair of the Adult Health and Social Care sub committee and Cllr Zarina Khalid, who became the performance lead for children and families to the committee. Their reports on their specific areas are included in the relevant sections below. We'd like to thank both Cllr Victoria Silver, who is now a member of the Adult Health and Social Care Scrutiny sub committee and Cllr Sachin Shah, who is now Finance Portfolio Holder for the time and energy they gave to the committee.

We have met 13 times during the last municipal year and the paragraphs below outline some of the issues we have considered. We'd like to thank all of the portfolio holders and officers who have met with us during the year and answered our questions. The papers and details re the outcomes from all of these meetings can be found [here](#).

Our meetings

During the course of the year we have, as in previous years, met with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for a question and answer session to consider general council policy (in July) and budget proposals (in January), these sessions were also attended by the portfolio holder for finance and we are grateful for the information which was shared with us. We would like to offer our thanks and best wishes to Cllr Bill Stephenson, who resigned as Leader of the Council in October last year and also to wish Cllr Thayya Idaikkadar good luck as he steps into the role. We look forward to meeting with Cllr Idaikkadar next year to offer scrutiny's challenge to his policy and financial decisions.

The specific items which have been considered at the committee include:

- Harrow's Development Plan
- Safeguarding Looked After Children
- Provision of Leisure and Libraries services
- Children Looked After Attendance and Achievement
- Community Safety Plan and Strategic Assessment
- Community Right to Challenge
- Youth Offending Team post inspection improvement plan
- Youth Justice Plan
- Schools Expansion Programme
- Progress on School Conversion to Academies
- Post Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Children Looked After Service improvement plan
- Climate Change Strategy
- Developments in Public Realm Services
- Parking Policy and Income Optimisation
- Corporate Plan
- Monitoring Council Tax Collection Rate
- Update on the Council's Top Families Project
- Data Quality
- An Update on the Council's Troubled Families work

Meetings with the Portfolio Holders

We have welcomed a number of portfolio holders to the meetings of the committee over the last year:

- *Cllr Keith Ferry, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder* attended in June to discuss the development plan and again in February to discuss the Harrow Card
- *Cllr Mitzi Green, Children, Schools and Families Portfolio Holder* attended in both October and November, in October to discuss the Youth Offending improvement plan, the Youth Justice Plan, the school expansion programme and progress with regard to the development of academies. In November, she attended to discuss the improvement plan which followed the council's Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children.
- *Cllr Graham Henson* attended in April to discuss Data Quality
- *Cllr Thayya Idaikkadar, in his capacity as Property and Major Contracts Portfolio Holder* attended to respond to the petition which had been received with regard to the development of Whitchurch playing fields.
- *Cllr Phil O'Dell, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder* attended with the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Dal Babu, to discuss the borough's community safety strategy and strategic assessment – which analyses the level of crime in the borough. He also attended in April to discuss priorities in the Environment and Enterprise Directorate
- *Cllr Sachin Shah Finance Portfolio Holder* attended both the Q&A session with the Leader and Chief Executive in July and January and also the meeting in March with regard to monitoring council tax collection

Working with Residents

As in previous years, we are pleased to have received the support of a number of residents via their co-opted positions on the committees and would like to thank the following people for giving up their time to the committees:

- Mrs Aamirah Khan, parent governor representative who sits on the Overview and Scrutiny committee
- Mrs Julie Rammelt, representative of the voluntary aided sector who sits on the Overview and Scrutiny committee
- Mr Julian Maw, chair of Harrow Link who sits on the Health and Social Care sub committee

In May, we were delighted to welcome representatives from the Harrow Youth Parliament to the committee

- Hannah Nathanson, Chair of Harrow Youth Parliament,
- Ladan Dirie, Harrow's Member of UK Youth Parliament, and
- David Howes, Harrow Mencap



These colleagues presented the findings of the scrutiny review 'Redefining Youth Engagement' to the committee which they had led alongside Cllr Victoria Silver and other scrutiny councillors. Their attendance at our meeting in May was an exciting and innovative enhancement of the Overview and Scrutiny committee's processes which we hope we will develop further.

Members of Harrow Youth Parliament consider recommendations from the Redefining Youth Engagement Review at their summit in November

With this in mind, we have created an additional co-opted position on the Overview and Scrutiny committee for representatives of the Harrow Youth Parliament which they are free to take up when items of particular interest to them are included in the committee's agenda. We look forward to a long and constructive working relationship with them – we hope to setup regular meetings between the parliament and the scrutiny leadership group to ensure that our agendas are reflecting the concerns of young people.

The specific report from the Performance and Finance sub committee also includes detail of the special committee meeting held with young people in March to consider how effectively the recommendations of the Redefining Youth Engagement review have been delivered. Again, this marks a step change in how we want to do scrutiny by improving the engagement and involvement of local people.

This year Overview and Scrutiny committee received a number of public questions – with regard to Vaughan School, and petitions – with regard to Whitchurch Playing Fields and Shopmobility. We are pleased that local people are beginning to see some of our more formal processes as a means by which they are able to engage in the council's decision making. We welcome their involvement and the opportunity it offers to the Overview and Scrutiny committee to provide a bridge between the council and the community and hope to receive more direct contact from local people in the future.

We continue to encourage the involvement of local people in our deliberations, especially through their direct involvement in some of our more detailed investigations, we have been really pleased to welcome resident co-optees onto our review teams and would like to thank the following people for their commitment to our work:

- Seamus English
- Cliff Lichfield
- Elizabeth Hugo
- Julian Maw
- Linda Robinson
- Tony Wood

We would like to thank the very many other residents who have participated in our projects by responding to questionnaires, attending workshops or just talking to us about their experience of council services.

We've also continued to use Facebook and Twitter and we're pleased that there are now 180 people following us on Twitter! However, there is more that we could do to improve our use of social media. We will continue to explore options in this area.

We will continue to ensure that residents' views form the bedrock of our investigations and welcome any views on how we can engage more effectively with the residents of the borough.

Review Programme

In addition to our work on the committees and the deliberations of the scrutiny lead councillors, the Overview and Scrutiny committee has commissioned a number of projects this year. These projects reflect issues of concern for the council and have hopefully helped the council to improve services. The detailed report from each of these projects and all other projects undertaken by Harrow Scrutiny can be found on our [website](#)

Standing Review of the Budget

This project, chaired by Cllr Barry Macleod-Cullinane, the vice chairman of the Performance and Finance sub committee has continued to investigate local government financial policy and its impact on the council. This year the group has considered a number of issues:

- *Management of major contract renewal* – investigated how effectively the council was monitoring the contract renewal process and thus how far it was able to maximise contract savings for the authority. Amongst the recommendations made were suggestions that the council continues the development of the contracts register, that we develop a strategic approach to cross-council/agency procurement and that there is greater political oversight of the contract/procurement process. The Performance and Finance sub committee also continues to monitor this area of the council's work
- *Localisation of Council Tax* – considered the financial implications for the council of the localisation of Council Tax and concluded that given the council's decision, that the new scheme is self financing, the council must ensure that incentives and support are offered to residents to return to work and that the scheme should link to regeneration, employment and training policies and opportunities.
- *Self financing of the Housing Revenue Account* – explored the implications for the council of self financing the Housing Revenue Account and the associated £90m cost of the buy out which will be paid back over the next 50 years. The review sought reassurance on a number of concerns including the impact of a 50-year debt on the council's financial viability and the capacity of the council's housing stock to support the repayment of the debt. On receiving the review report at cabinet, the Portfolio Holder for Housing welcomed the review's positive consideration of how the HRA was managed, particularly suggestions with regard to how the Council might examine ways to bring about an increase in the supply of affordable housing.
- *Management and strategic use of the council's capital budget* – this component of the review's work programme considered the council's strategic approach to capital expenditure, how effectively the council is using its capital finances and the capital financing opportunities available to it in the context of the recession

Safeguarding

The Children and Families lead members were alerted by the Corporate Director for Children and Families during 2011 regarding progress on implementation of some of the recommendations that came out of the NHS London Safeguarding Children Improvement Team (SIT) visit to the Harrow health community in October 2010. In order to investigate this, the Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned an investigation into why the implementation of recommendations had been delayed. Given that the main focus of the SIT team visit was on health provision in the borough relevant to children's safeguarding, this was the main focus of the review group. However, as Members began to consider evidence

relating to this area in greater detail it became evident that in order to fully assess the effectiveness of children's safeguarding arrangements in the borough it would also be necessary to consider the council's services. The review produced an interim report to support the organisation's preparations for the Ofsted inspection which took place in summer 2012 and also agreed to continue its investigation in the context of the result of this inspection. As such, no specific recommendations were made.

During late 2012/early 2013 the Children and Families lead members have begun discussions with regard to the Child's Journey Through Care project which is the vehicle through which this investigation of safeguarding services will be completed. Details of this review are provided below.

A Child's Journey Through Care

In summer 2012, the council's safeguarding and looked after children's services were inspected by Ofsted which concluded that they could only be considered 'adequate'. In order to support the service to respond to the criticisms it received and to improve services to vulnerable children in the borough, preparation for a project to consider how a child's journey through the care system might be improved has begun. This project will consider how well the council's services measure up to what is considered to be 'good' practice and how well services are able to respond to the very specific issues which may arise in individual cases, whilst ensuring that high standards of care are maintained. The review is likely to take place in the summer of 2013.

Private Rented Sector Housing

This project, chaired by Cllr Marilyn Ashton, considered ways in which the council might work in partnership with the Private Rented Housing Sector in future, in the context of the growth of the sector in providing housing for our residents and the increase in levels of homelessness. The investigation sought the views of tenants, non-tenants and landlords to derive its recommendations.

The review group concluded that the council should adopt a mix of both top-down and bottom-up approaches to working with the sector. By top-down, it meant that development policy should drive the provision of a good mix of high quality, reasonably priced accommodation. By bottom-up, it meant that the council should work in partnership with the sector, using a mix of both 'enabling' and 'enforcing' approaches. It is through these routes that problems of low standards and poor quality could be more effectively ameliorated. The findings of the review were welcomed by both cabinet and officers. At cabinet, the housing portfolio holder commented that the review was timely, as the Directorate was finalising its housing strategies and that all the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Group would be taken on board.

Customer Care

Councillors have been concerned for some time with regard to the consistency of the application of our customer care standards. This project, chaired by Cllr Paul Osborn, vice chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee, has investigated the effectiveness of the council's customer services, in particular the resident experience. The investigation has included visits to other boroughs, experience of front line customer interaction, and an analysis of how the council responds to complaints. The review will report its findings later this year.

Accessible Transport

For a number of years, the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities or restricted mobility in Harrow has been a concern. There are no stations in the borough with completely step free access from street to train and our key station, Harrow on the Hill, a major transport hub which serves both the town centre – still one of the 11 metropolitan centres in London – and Northwick Park hospital – a regional specialist and local acute hospital – is completely inaccessible for people with mobility issues.

This project, chaired by Cllr Sue Anderson, is investigating the impact of poor access to public transport on people with disabilities and others with restricted mobility. The project will engage widely with people with disabilities and disability groups in order to assess how far the council and partners, such as Transport for London, are delivering their stated ambitions with regard to accessible transport

Members of the review plan their project



The review's conclusions are expected to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in the summer.

Our conclusions and next steps

Our next year will be the final one from under this administration. We have already determined the remaining projects we would like to consider during this time and our next annual report will detail the outcomes from these projects. The projects include:

- Changes in Public Realm services
- Performance of Mental health services
- Early intervention to deliver improved outcomes and resource savings
- Further projects for the Standing Review of the Budget



Cllr Jerry Miles

Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Paul Osborn

Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee meetings	13
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Keith Ferry, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder x 2 • Cllr Mitzi Green, Children, Schools and Families Portfolio Holder. • Cllr Graham Henson, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder • Cllr Thayya Idaikkadar, once in his capacity as Property and Major Contracts Portfolio Holder and twice in his capacity as Leader • Cllr Phil O'Dell, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder x 2 • Cllr Sachin Shah, Finance Portfolio Holder x 2

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Report from Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Our Sub-Committee

The Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee looks in detail at how the council's services are performing in-year.

We monitor service and financial performance by analysing data and then requesting briefings or details of action plans in place where necessary. The sub-committee can make recommendations for improvement and if necessary make referrals to the Overview and Scrutiny committee if further work is needed.

This work includes, for example, regular review of the Cabinet's Revenue and Capital Monitoring report and quarterly Corporate Scorecard.

We have slightly amended our terms of reference this year to reflect that we can consider and monitor the performance of the council's partners.

Our meetings

Our regular Chair and Vice-Chairman's briefings drive the work programme of the sub-committee. Our main areas of interest in 2012/13 have been:

- **Payment of invoices and application of contract procedure rules** – this is the third year in which we have been following progress in this area. We have monitored the implementation of the recommendations arising from the internal audit review on the application of contract procedure rules (CPRs), which focused on purchase orders raised after the date of invoice. Four of the recommendations made to procurement were postponed owing to delay to upgrades to the SAP system. We requested a briefing on current issues with SAP and planned future improvements and were told in November that a series of changes are being implemented that will be completed in time for the first quarter of 2012/13. These will include forecasts of process compliance & accuracy as well as new monthly budget forecasts and simplified 'front-end' for managers intended to make it easier to comply with the CPRs. We remain concerned at the length of time being taken for the organisation to address these issues and about how effective the SAP changes will be in tackling the serious problems repeatedly identified since 2006 (we have asked to see all the reports in that time). There needs to be clear accountability to Member level, and we will continue to monitor this area carefully.
- **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Review of Financial Management** – having had a number of concerns over the past few years about some aspects of the council's financial management, we were keen to be briefed on the finding of CIPFA's review. The review identified some areas for improvement including financial management strategy, culture, financial management competence for finance and non-finance staff and financial information systems. The findings reflected some of our ongoing concerns (for example budget holder forecasting compliance), which have related to both systems and processes noted above.

- **Complaints** – this is the first year that we have received the annual complaints reports for children and families’ services and adults’ services rather than O&S. We were pleased to have the relevant portfolio holders in attendance for these items. We think that this is a sensible development in that it provides us with further intelligence in our consideration of the performance of services. There were no major issues for either area, other than the identification of safeguarding as a target area for improvement. We note that most of the complaints related to customer service issues such as delays in service provision or lack of adequate communication rather than more serious risks related to safeguarding decisions, for example. Given that scrutiny intends to follow up its interim report on safeguarding, complaints intelligence may be a line of enquiry worthy of further exploration.
- **Householder planning applications** – *Processing of householder planning applications within 6 weeks* – Having monitored this measure at our briefing for a number of quarters (from quarter 2 2011/12) and not having received the further information that we requested on underperformance, the matter was escalated to the sub-committee. A formal report from the Divisional Director for Planning was considered at the sub-committee in July 2012. We were advised that the statutory target for decision-making is eight weeks rather than six and that the six-week target had been introduced with the purpose of providing an improvement of service to residents. The target was stretching and served to highlight operational and capability issues that needed to be addressed within the service to achieve both improvements in service delivery as well as targets in the medium term financial strategy. The sub-committee also requested reports for January 2013 on the Planning and Access Harrow Lean review and for April 2013 on planning consultation.
- **Major contracts and procurement savings** – Given the increasing importance of delivering the council’s procurement savings and delivering services with even greater efficiency, this item has become a regular six-monthly report to the sub-committee. As the council moves towards greater levels of commissioning, we too will need to ensure scrutiny helps to provide proper oversight. In January 2013 we questioned progress on phase two of the Procurement Transformation Programme that had begun in November 2012, the scope for further savings beyond the £4.6m to date and for higher income generation rather than simply cost management. We are concerned about the risks to the council in any joint borough approach and the possible impact on service levels from substantial cost savings such as those reported in the CAMHS case study. We will also examine at our April 2013 meeting the governance & structures for the procurement process, further detail on Repairs & Cyclical Maintenance, Leisure, Highways & Adult Social Care and an update on the Leisure/Libraries contract negotiations.
- **Children looked after (CLA) – education and attendance**
This continues to be an area of concern for us, along with the children’s lead members. The Virtual Headteacher’s action plan was considered at O&S and a meeting to examine progress made since that meeting is to be scheduled in 2013/14.
- **Past reviews** – we have continued to monitor progress on past reviews, including:
 - Measuring up: council’s use of performance information – phase 2. We are pleased to note the majority of our recommendations have been implemented and look forward to progress on the remainder, including disseminating performance information to the public.

- Snow Clearance: we have requested an update on the pavement gritting policy when it is established.
- Debt Recovery: update planned for early in 2013/14
- Redefining Youth Engagement: we held a special meeting on 4 March 2013 at Cedars Youth and Community Centre on progress in implementing last year's scrutiny review recommendations. Twenty young people attended from Harrow Youth Parliament (HYP); Shaftesbury School; X16 (employment readiness and work experience scheme); Looked after children (CLA); Flex Girls Youth Club; No Limits (after school club); and National Citizenship Scheme (NCS) graduates. A common theme was the need for the council to do more to take its message directly to young people and, in particular, to use schools more in communicating with young people. Other suggestions included: youth versions of Neighbourhood Champions, involving young people in commissioning decisions and a better HYP website & social media.
- **Member development** – in October we trailed a session on *Finding out what you need to know: how to get the best out of performance information*. This session covered:
 - Key principles – stressing the power of the basic question and no need for specialist technical skills.
 - Background to the council's performance management cycle and P&F.
 - Some health warnings about data and some information on quartiles, value for money and data presentation.
 - Understanding scorecards – information on how to read a Harrow scorecard, explaining the columns and terms such as status, thresholds and polarity.
 - Understanding scorecards – an exercise where data was revealed quarter by quarter and Members discussed areas of concern.
 - Practical examples – some real examples of how P&F has used and challenged performance information.

The session was well received and we plan to offer it to new councillors after the next election.

Next steps

This year has been productive for the sub-committee. In 2013/14 we hope to build on our experience and expertise and to continue to provide both support and constructive challenge to the council's service and financial performance.



Councillor Sue Anderson
Chair, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub-Committee



Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane
Vice-Chairman, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Committee meetings	5 ordinary 1 special
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	<p>Cllr Brian Gate, Children, Schools and Families Portfolio Holder x 1</p> <p>Cllr Margaret Davine, Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder x 1</p> <p>Cllr Mitzi Green, Children, Schools and Families Portfolio Holder x 1</p> <p>Cllr Keith Ferry, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder x 1</p> <p>Cllr Sachin Shah, Finance Portfolio Holder x 1</p>

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Report from the Adult Health and Social Care Lead Members and the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Our Sub-Committee

The Health and Social Care Sub-Committee considers health, social care and wellbeing issues key to Harrow residents on a local, London wide and national level. A number of changes are being put in place and will continue to be implemented in the health and social care environment following the introduction of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This has been much of the focus of the committee in 2011/12.

The role of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Lead Members is to consider, at both committee level and also outside of committee, a range of important health and social care issues that affect Harrow. As part of our role to champion health and social care issues for residents we work closely with the Director for Community Health and Wellbeing, colleagues at NHS Harrow, North West London Hospitals and with other key providers of health and social care services in the borough.

Some of the work we carry out as lead members is referred on to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee for formal consideration of key issues. As ever, this year has been busy and there has been a great deal of crossover between our work as lead members and our work with fellow members on the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Our key areas of focus throughout the year

Health and social care reforms

There have been many changes in health and social care policy in the past couple of years and it is our role as lead members to keep abreast of these policy developments. We have kept a close eye on national reforms and the progress and plans for implementation of these at a local level:

- Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) – this will become a statutory committee of the local authority in April 2013. In Harrow, a shadow HWBB has been established and has been progressing work in anticipation of April. One of the key outputs of the HWBB is the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Health and Sub-Committee considered a draft of this in the summer.
- Public Health transition – the responsibility for public health will be transferred to local authorities from April 2013. Harrow and Barnet Councils have agreed to share a service, to be hosted from Harrow, and we have kept abreast of progress on these plans.
- Establishment of HealthWatch – HealthWatch will take over from the Local Involvement Network (LINK) in April 2013. This will be the local patient and public champion across the health and social care sector. It will be important to forge strong relationships with Healthwatch and ensure that both the HealthWatch and scrutiny work programmes are complementary to local concerns. The Chairman of the outgoing LINK sat on our sub-committee in 2012/13 as an advisor to the committee.
- Clinical Commissioning Group – PCTs will cease to operate from 1 April 2013 with the responsibility for commissioning local primary care services passing to the Clinical Commissioning Group. We have had attendance from the Chair of the Harrow CCG to discuss key issues. Developing relationships with GPs as the future commissioners of services will be vital going forward.

'Shaping a Healthier Future' for NW London – consultation

Shaping a Healthier Future is a programme set up by NHS NW London to improve healthcare for the two million people living in NW London. The programme is being led by the eight clinical commissioning groups and other clinicians across NW London who have identified the case for change which highlights the inconsistencies and failings of the current system and sets out objectives for a better, healthier future for NW London.

The aim of the programme is to ensure that the right care is delivered in the right places and a number of detailed proposals for how services could be organised differently in the future have been developed. These proposals formed the basis of a full public consultation which ran from 2 July to 8 October 2012.

As this represents a substantial variation to service provision in boroughs across the NW London sector, a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) was set up to provide external scrutiny to the impact of the proposals and the consultation processes adopted by the programme. As lead members, we represented Harrow Council on this JHOSC, alongside councillors from 9 other boroughs - Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond, Wandsworth and Westminster.

Harrow Council also responded to the consultation from a local perspective. This work was led by scrutiny members and informed by evidence gathered through Harrow's participation on the JHOSC, consideration of the Shaping a Healthier Future pre-consultation business case and discussions held at a special meeting of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee. These discussions explored the impact of the Shaping a Healthier Future proposals in Harrow and the consultation process, and involved representatives from:

- NHS NW London's Shaping a Healthier Future programme
- North West London Hospitals Trust
- NHS Brent & Harrow
- Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group
- Harrow Local Involvement Network
- Harrow Council

The scrutiny response was also adopted by the Executive and therefore sent in response to the consultation on behalf of Harrow Council.

The outcomes of the consultation were published at the end of November 2012. 17,022 submissions in total were received on the proposed changes. Some of the concerns raised by respondents were around;

- the impact of proposals on accessing services (journey times and public transport accessibility);
- the capacity and ability of hospital and out of hospital services to meet demand and support change; and,
- the need for information on what the changes mean for people in practice and when/how to access particular services.

These concerns were echoed in our own response, considered at Committee on 11 December 2012, particularly regarding the impact on Northwick Park Hospital and its capacity to take on the growth in demand for its services and additional patient flow; the travel, transport and access issues for Northwick Park Hospital, and, the need for communication to residents regarding the rationale for changes.

The Joint Committee of the Primary Care Trusts made its decision on the future configuration of services at its meeting on 19 February 2013. For Harrow this means that Northwick Park will remain as one of five major hospitals in NW London to provide A&E and Urgent Care Centre services. From a local perspective we will continue to monitor the pressure on Northwick Park due to the loss of facilities for Ealing and Brent residents. How far the JHOSC will continue to review outcomes for NW London will be determined as plans progress. Full details to the report can be found [here](#).

Merger of Ealing Hospital Trust and North West London Hospitals

At committee level, we have considered progress on the plans to merge Ealing Hospital Trust (EHT) and North West London Hospitals Trust (NWLHT). We hope that the merger will realise savings by replacing the two trust boards with one, creating an opportunity to unify management, streamline work processes and simplify management structures and achieve Foundation Trust status. The merged organisation aims to provide the clinical vision to deliver an integrated healthcare service through the Integrated Care Organisation and increased partnership with GPs and social care sector.

We welcome that following consideration of the financial and clinical benefits, NHS London sought further assurances that future plans are financially sound and provide the best possible quality of services for residents. Additionally, the outcome of *Shaping a Healthier Future* in February 2013 will need to be reflected in the supporting strategies and commissioning plans. We look forward to consultation on the revised proposals at the end of April 2013.

Other areas of work

This year the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee also considered:

- Progress on the implementations of Harrow STARRS (Short Term Assessment Rehabilitation and Reablement Services).
- The outcomes and impacts of the Adult Services Consultation which sought residents' views as to how to achieve significant savings whilst ensuring that Council services could be run most efficiently for the benefit of residents.
- The Quality Account of key providers in Harrow including North West London Hospitals, Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and Central and North West London Foundation Trust were also scrutinised by the Committee.

Looking to the future

At a time of considerable change in the delivery and provision of health and social care services, keeping abreast of the emerging policies and service changes will be paramount. As detailed throughout the account of our work this year as lead members and also with the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee, there is a great deal of work that will need to be done over the coming year to monitor progress and consider service development and changes. Our key focus will be on:

- The implementation of the 'Shaping a Healthier Future' programme – the reconfiguration of acute services in NW London and the out of hospital strategy for Harrow
- The transfer of public health responsibilities to the local authority
- The merger of Ealing Hospital Trust and North West London Hospitals Trust
- Forging robust working relationships with new health and social care bodies – Harrow HealthWatch and Advocacy Service, Health and Wellbeing Board and Clinical Commissioning Group
- A project review group will look at Mental Health service provision in the borough.



Cllr Krishna James

Chairman Health and Social Care Sub-Committee
Policy Lead for Health and Social Care



Cllr Vina Mithani

Vice-Chairman Health and Social Care Sub-Committee
Performance Lead for Health and Social Care

Committee meetings	4
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	
Attendance by Partners	<p>David Cheesman, Director of Strategy, North West London Hospitals Trust (2)</p> <p>Dr William Lynn, Patientcare, North West London Hospitals Trust (2)</p> <p>Dr Andrew Howe, Director of Public Health (1)</p> <p>Carole Furlong, Public Health Consultant, NHS Harrow (1)</p> <p>Dr Amol Kelshiker, Chair, Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group (1)</p> <p>Javina Sehgal, Borough Director, NHS Harrow (2)</p> <p>Dr Mike Anderson, Medical Director, Chelsea & Westminster Hospital (on behalf of the SaHF programme) (1)</p> <p>Tina Benson, Director of Operations, North West London Hospitals Trust (1)</p> <p>David McVittie, Chief Executive, North West London Hospitals Trust (1)</p> <p>Marcel Berenblut, Head of Communications, NHS Brent & Harrow (1)</p> <p>Rebecca Wellburn, Deputy Harrow Borough Director (1)</p> <p>Simon Crawford, Senior Responsible Officer Ealing and North West London Organisational Futures Programme (1)</p>

Reports from the Lead Members and the Scrutiny Leadership Group

Leadership Group

This informal monthly meeting of committee chairs and vice chairmen and scrutiny lead councillors considers the strategic direction of scrutiny, schedules items for the committee agendas, proposes items for more in-depth investigation and facilitates co-ordination between committees and lead councillors.

In addition to the standing items, the leadership group has considered a number of specific issues.

Spans of responsibility

During the year, it has become clear that each lead councillor's span of responsibility has created considerable pressure. The leads are expected to become a champion in their respective 'portfolios' and to have a considerable breadth of knowledge of the services within this area. This is becoming an unreasonable expectation and as a result, the leadership group has agreed to align, as far as possible, the leads roles to the Corporate Directorates. This has resulted in the following leads' responsibilities:

- Children and Families
- Community Health and Well Being – excluding the adult social care component
- Environment and Enterprise
- Health and Social Care – including adult social care
- Resources

We have also agreed to work with Corporate Directors and portfolio holders to identify the priorities for each service and from this to identify priorities for scrutiny consideration. As part of this, each pair of leads has also considered the commissioning panel papers for their respective area. As in previous years, each pair of leads continues to meet with their Corporate Director on a quarterly basis. Whilst the scrutiny team will continue to provide the leads with policy updates across their respective area for information, they will focus their investigative activities on the priorities which their discussions with portfolio holders and officers have identified.

Working with Harrow Youth Parliament

The Redefining Youth Engagement review was a groundbreaking scrutiny investigation in the way in which it involved young people in leading the project. As mentioned in the report from the Overview and Scrutiny committee, this project has resulted in the committee creating a co-opted position to enable representatives of Harrow Youth Parliament to attend the committee where there are items of particular interest to them on the agenda. We hope to go further than this and towards the end of 2012, representatives of the Leadership Group met with Harrow Youth Parliament to discuss how the committee's agendas might be developed with the parliament in order that we are picking up issues which are of importance to young people. We will continue these discussions in 2013/14.

Questions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

As the chair and vice chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee have reported, residents have begun to recognise the potential offered by the committee to engage with the council with regard to decisions which are being made. Our process for this prescribes that questions raised by residents are responded to via the chair of the committee. We have asked our officers if there is scope to change this process to enable the committee to broker a

discussion between residents and relevant portfolio holder(s) and officer(s), either via a substantive discussion at the committee or, if the issue seems to warrant it, via a special meeting of the committee. We hope to be able to agree a protocol for improving our process in this area during the lifetime of this administration.

DRAFT

Report from the Children and Families' Leads

Our areas of focus

This has been a challenging year for the Children and Families directorate. During the year they have consolidated their New Operating Model, which has involved a number of changes of personnel and the introduction of new ways of working and they have also undergone a major Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services. Such a huge level of change in services for some of our most vulnerable residents has rightly attracted significant interest, not only from us as the Children and Families scrutiny lead councillors but also from other scrutiny councillors, particularly those involved in the Performance and Finance committee. We are working together to support the directorate and we welcome the support for our deliberations from our colleagues.

We continue to meet with the Corporate Director and her team and would like to place on record, our gratitude for her and her management team's openness and accessibility, it is gratifying that the scrutiny challenge is received so positively and that recognition is given at such a senior level of the organisation of the positive support that scrutiny challenge can bring to services.

During the year we and our scrutiny colleagues have considered the following issues:

- **Children Looked After attendance and achievement** – as corporate parents we were concerned about performance in this area and have sought several briefings to explain the issues in particular the role of the Virtual Head Teacher. We are grateful for the information provided to us by officers and we are particularly pleased that we will now receive regular and up-to-date performance information in the form of the Children and Families performance scorecard which will be sent to us after each quarterly Improvement Board
- **Net schools capacity and schools place planning** – early in the year, we raised concerns with regard to the availability of school places in the borough. We have received a number of briefings on this issue to clarify how the council assesses both the likely number of children needing school places and the capacity of schools to accommodate these numbers. We are grateful for the support of the Resources lead councillors who will continue to monitor this.
- **Youth Offending Team inspection improvement plan** – we were very concerned to learn at the October meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee of the very poor outcome of the Youth Offending Team inspection. We have discussed proposals to improve this poor performance with the Corporate Director at our subsequent briefings and we appreciate the candour with which these discussions have been approached. We will continue to monitor the performance of this service.
- **Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services improvement plan** – this was a major inspection for the service and the results show there is clearly room to improve our services. We have continued to discuss this with the Corporate Director and her management team. During these discussions, we have been advised of the significant tightening of the inspection regime which means that simply just addressing the issues identified in the inspection report will not be enough to really improve services in this area, we were also advised that in future, all inspections will be

unannounced which means that our pursuit of high quality services can no longer be simply linked to the delivery of a successful inspection.

We have decided to support the service by working with them to define a robust definition of 'good' for Harrow and to identify any gaps in our service provision. This is our 'Child's Journey Through Care' project and further information on this project is included below

- **Data quality in Children's Services** – we were concerned during our discussions with officers with regard to the outcome of the Ofsted inspection that there seemed to be issues regarding the quality of management information being produced in Children's Services. We considered a report from the service which addressed our concerns at the March meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

In order to facilitate monitoring of some of these issues and to minimise the need for officers to meet with different scrutiny bodies, we established specific meetings of the Children's Lead Councillors, the Chair and Vice Chairman of the Performance and Finance sub committee and the Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee. This group met on a monthly basis from February to April with the Corporate Director Children and Families to consider performance in three specific areas:

- Attendance and achievement of Children Looked After
- Delivery of the post Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children improvement plan
- Delivery of the post Youth Offending Team inspection improvement plan

In June last year we published our interim report of the review undertaken of '**Safeguarding**' services. This review used as its starting point the report from the NHS London Safeguarding Improvement Team visit and considered a number of issues:

- Roles and responsibilities across agencies
- Staff training
- The specific location of health visitors in children's centres
- Working relationships across agencies
- The structure of the Integrated Care Organisation
- Engagement with private providers

The review concluded that:

'there is a clear commitment by all the organisations and officers the review group met with to safeguard children at risk in Harrow. One thing that is clear from what the review group has considered thus far is that children's safeguarding is not just the responsibility of one agency alone but for everyone, from Councillors as Corporate Parents to officers working in seemingly unrelated roles throughout the council'

The review recommended that further work be undertaken in this area once the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children was known. This will be picked up in our **Child's Journey Through Care** review. We have been joined in this project by Cllrs Gate, Ashton and Macleod Cullinane and our ambition is to help the council to improve the services to our very vulnerable children.



In order to assess performance in this area, we will discuss the definition of 'good' practice and compare our own performance against this. We will also consider some practical case studies of performance by the council and challenge how robustly the service is able to respond to unforeseen circumstances. For example, how do social workers and other officers respond if a child refuses to engage with services or if a social worker moves on or if there is disagreement between professionals as to how a child should be looked-after. In this way we hope to identify any gaps in service provision and help all of the agencies to improve their services for our vulnerable children. Our detailed investigation will commence later in the year and full details of our conclusions will be included in next year's annual report.

Looking to the future

We will continue to monitor the performance of Children and Families Directorate in those areas which appear to have struggled – Youth Offending Team, Children Looked After and schools capacity. We also hope to be able to support the Directorate in any Ofsted inspection which may occur during the year by ensuring that we continue to provide constructive challenge to the Corporate Director and her team.



Councillor Christine Bednell
Policy Lead
Children and Young people



Councillor Zarina Khalid
Performance Lead
Children and young people

Report from the Community Health and Well Being Leads

Our areas of focus

As part of the reorganisation of leads responsibilities, this new portfolio has been created. Whilst it covers the majority of the area for which we previously had responsibility, we have passed consideration of crime and community safety over to our colleagues looking at Environment and Enterprise and we have taken over responsibility for housing issues.

During the year we have considered a number of issues and we summarise these below.

Community consultation and engagement

We have considered two aspects of this:

- *The impact on residents of transfer of care between providers*
Although this is not specifically an issue for the Community Health and Well Being leads, we would like to monitor how effectively health bodies are communicating the changes in health provision to residents, particularly those associated with 'Shaping a Healthier Future' proposals, and what engagement activity is underpinning the changes, in particular with regard to 'emergency' access. We have asked for further information on this.
- *Neighbourhood Incentive Scheme (NIS)*
We are concerned that councillors do not appear to be given sufficient support to deliver effective consultation/engagement when decisions are being made with regard to use of NIS funds. We are thus anxious that this lack of support could mean that we run the risk of creating unnecessary community tensions as we do not discuss proposals effectively with residents. We intend to investigate this further.

Well Being

- *Mental health*
Having considered information provided to us via the corporate scorecard, we have some concerns with regard to services to people in receipt of secondary mental health care. The Overview and Scrutiny committee has identified mental health as an issue which will be further investigated and we have therefore volunteered to participate in this project and to continue to monitor the performance of the specific indicator.
- *Housing*
As we have already explained, our changed brief now includes housing and as such we would like to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the scrutiny review which was undertaken last year into the provision of private rented sector housing. We are particularly concerned about increasing homelessness in the borough and would like to see more creative approaches to the provision of housing in both the private and social sector.
- *Parks*
We would like to investigate how the borough's parks can be utilised more effectively as health and well being resources. Whilst the parks generally come under the jurisdiction of our colleagues who have responsibility for Environment and Enterprise, we would like to work with them to consider how these valuable community resources can become a focal point for health and well being activities. This is something we will return to next year.

Neighbourhood Champions

We will continue to monitor the implementation of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme. This year we have sought reassurance with regard to how the register of champions is maintained and in particular, what happens when a resident who is a Neighbourhood Champion moves house

Looking to the Future

Next year, Cllr Asante will become the borough's mayor. As such it is possible that our responsibilities may change. However, we will continue to monitor the areas we have highlighted and, in particular we look forward to our involvement in the investigation of mental health provision in the borough.



Cllr Chris Mote
Policy Lead
Community Health and Well Being



Cllr Nana Asante
Performance Lead
Community Health and Well Being

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Report from the Environment and Enterprise Leads

This year has seen our policy area altered slightly, in order to better align scrutiny with the new directorate structure of the council. As a result we have gained community safety but passed housing to our Community, Health and Well-being colleagues.

We met with the Corporate Director Place Shaping and the Director of Environmental Services in the first half of the year in order to review the annual service plans and to consider which areas should be our focus. These meetings were followed by a briefing with the new Corporate Director for Environment and Enterprise and we look forward to working with her in the future.

Our areas of focus

Given our broad brief, over the last twelve months we have recognised the need to keep ourselves well informed about our policy area. Our activities have included:

- **Police and crime** – we visited the consultation meeting for Harrow on the Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017 organised by the Mayor's Office for Police And Crime (MOPAC), where we were informed about the MOPAC's goals of a 20% reduction in 7 priority crimes, a 20% boost in public confidence and 20% reduction in spending. Another point of discussion is the planned closure of certain local police station front desks in Pinner and Wealdstone, although the front desk in Pinner is staffed by volunteers. We're currently awaiting a visit to the new war room-style 'Grip and Pace' police coordination centre.
- **Visits to local emergency accommodation (bed and breakfast) as part of the private rented sector review** – visited three bed and breakfasts in the borough where we viewed the accommodation and talked to a number of clients about the size and cleanliness of the accommodation provided. The evidence we gathered fed into the final report of the scrutiny review into Private rented sector housing in Harrow more information is included below and in the Chair and Vice Chairman's report from the Overview and Scrutiny committee.
- **Public Realm/Access Harrow** – this project was delivered in 2011/12. Savings made during 2011 had not impacted materially on service delivery and some of the previous issues around recording had been addressed as a result. We received a presentation in October on the new street based services system with a real-time demonstration on how complaints received by Access Harrow were passed directly to street based Public Realm teams via handheld data devices. This briefing has informed the customer care review, which is still ongoing.
- **Affordable warmth and fuel poverty** – having followed progress on the RE:FIT project and the council's Carbon Reduction Strategy, we have also looked at the new Climate Change Action Plan and Delivering Warmer Homes (HECA) Strategy. We provided detailed comments on the strategy for the Overview & Scrutiny committee in February, where our comments were well received and were referred on to Cabinet for consideration. We were asked by the committee to do further work on the performance indicators included in the strategy and this work is ongoing.

- **Neighbourhood planning and planning consultation** – We were briefed about changes resulting from the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning, which gives neighbourhood groups the opportunity to prepare planning documents. Government subsidy is available to councils to support the costs of neighbourhood planning. The Stanmore Society was the one group that has expressed an interest and after having met with officers, the society will need to decide if it wishes to apply. While no specific efforts had been made to encourage other groups to apply, the council had many pre-existing links with established local groups. In effect, neighbourhood planning was aimed outside London where groups such as parish councils could take on the role. We are keen to look at planning consultation more widely, as we have a number of concerns about how consultation has been conducted on a number of different developments. In order to investigate these concerns further we have asked officers to provide the Performance and Finance committee meeting in April with a report which will consider planning applications, the handover from the planning application to the enforcement stage, the subsequent enforcement and also the relations between the planning department and major developers. After this time we will consider whether we wish to undertake any more formal investigation of performance in this area.
- **Harrow residents' card** – we were briefed on the plans to consider introducing a residents' card, which could be used for a range of purposes by residents such as parking, leisure and retail discounts. We were pleased that the Harrow Card scheme was also discussed in the Overview & Scrutiny committee meeting in February in the context of a larger discussion about parking policy in Harrow. A feasibility study for the card has recently been completed, which will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March. We will continue to monitor the introduction of the card with particular reference to our concerns re potential costs and benefits, implementation and the method of card allocations which we have already highlighted with the Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder.
- **Private Rented Sector Review** – we were pleased to participate in this review, which was in part initiated as a result of a request received by us last year from the Divisional Director to consider ways in which the council might work in partnership with the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in future, in the context of the growth of the sector in providing housing for our residents. In particular we were keen that the forthcoming Private Sector Housing Strategy should make links to other major policy areas such as economic development and climate change. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee highlighted earlier in this report that the Private Rented Sector review was welcomed by both cabinet and officers and all of our recommendations were accepted.
- **Accessible Transport Review** – we are currently participating in this review with three other councillors. As highlighted in the Chair and Vice Chairman's introduction, we have been concerned for some time with regard to the very poor access to public transport available to residents of Harrow who have disabilities. We have considered this as Environment and Enterprise leads during the course of the administration but as we have remained unhappy with performance, we decided to dedicate time to a more detailed investigation. As a part of the review, we will meet with residents of Harrow who have different disabilities and hear their experiences of using public transport as well as meet with officers to discuss how priorities for future developments are determined. We hope that this thorough investigation of the impact of poor accessibility to public transport on our residents' life experiences can help the council to improve provision.

Looking to the future

The Public Realm Integrated Services Model (PRISM) is currently being implemented in the Environment and Enterprise Directorate. PRISM aims to deliver a new organisational approach to providing services, new ways of carrying out current services and a new technology package. Later in the year, we're planning to have a closer look at the impacts PRISM has.

In 2012/13 we have worked to build closer working relationships with the directorate. We would like to build on this by establishing more regular briefings with the Corporate Director, including regular review of the directorate scorecard and progress against the service plan.



Councillor Stephen Wright
Policy Lead
Environment and Enterprise



Councillor Sue Anderson
Performance Lead
Environment and Enterprise

DRAFT

Report from the Resources Leads

Our areas of focus

We have continued to meet with the Corporate Director of Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive to monitor issues of importance within the Resources Directorate. In particular, we are pleased to have been appraised of the merger of the Chief Executive's office, Legal and Democratic Services and the Corporate Finance function which has brought about very significant changes and resulted in the establishment of the Resources Directorate. We are grateful for the support we have received from officers and we wish the Corporate Director of Resources well as she leaves the authority in the summer.

In December, we were briefed on issues arising from the Resources Directorate commissioning panel priorities. These included:

- Channel migration in Access Harrow
- Changes in the IT systems
- Reduction in committee services support
- Additional growth pressures

We have agreed that we will continue to monitor these issues, particularly the impact of channel migration in Access Harrow.

Our primary focus this year has been in two specific areas:

- Debt Recovery
- School Place Planning

Debt Recovery

With regard to Debt Recovery, we note that the council intends to incorporate the findings from our review into the wider project currently underway to consider implications of the Government's welfare reform proposals. We are extremely concerned about the potential impact of these reforms on our residents' capacity to pay their bills and as such, we are even more determined to press the council to adopt the primary recommendation from the Debt Recovery review which we undertook in 2011. This recommendation urged the council to implement some form of 'check' in the debt recovery process which can institute a 'pause' in the process before bankruptcy proceedings are instigated. In this way we would hope that the devastating impact of bankruptcy is only applied to those of our residents who 'won't pay' rather than to those who 'can't pay'.

Our concerns about the likely numbers of people seeing themselves at the wrong end of the council's debt recovery process have also been exacerbated by the assumptions which have been made in the budget with regard the numbers of people the council is assuming will be able to pay all or part of the Council Tax for the first time. We are very concerned that the high assumption will mean that we will see increased numbers of people going through the debt recovery process in order to safeguard the council's finances. We are also concerned that the sums pursued via this process will be comparatively small, especially when set against the cost of pursuing the debt. Again, whilst we have no issue with the processes being applied to those of our residents who are refusing to pay, we hope that the mitigations we proposed in our review can safeguard the more vulnerable of our residents who are unable to pay these new bills.

We will continue to monitor both the impact of the welfare reforms on the council and the implementation of the Council Tax support scheme and we look forward to being briefed on the outcome of the council's welfare reform work and how the recommendations we made in our review have been able to influence this.

School Place Planning

During the year, we continued to investigate the capacity of our schools. We have received a number of briefings which explain the process by which our schools' capacity is determined but we remain concerned that the borough does not have sufficient space in future to support our young people. This is particularly exacerbated by the development of academies which will be more difficult to influence in terms of short term expansions or 'bulge classes'.

Whilst on the face of it this issue appears to be of greater relevance to our Children and Family colleagues, we feel that the availability of place for education is a resource issue for the council and as such we will continue to seek reassurance that we are able to provide sufficient places to education our children. We will continue to discuss this with officers.

Looking to the future

Next year will be the final year of the current administration and we hope to conclude the projects which we started during our time as the Resources leads, particularly to influence the council's approach to debt management. We would also like to explore the council's capital debt and pension liabilities. Our final report, next year, will outline our findings in this area.



Cllr Jerry Miles
Policy Lead
Resources



Cllr Tony Ferrari
Performance Lead
Resources

Scrutiny Member Development Activities

Member development activities for scrutiny members that focus on generic skills and knowledge, useful to members in their roles as effective councillors, are incorporated and delivered through the corporate member development programme. Member development activities specific to scrutiny members are detailed further below.

Skills training on performance and finance scrutiny

In October we trialled a session on *Finding out what you need to know: how to get the best out of performance information*. This session covered:

- Key principles – stressing the power of the basic question and no need for specialist technical skills
- Background to the council's performance management cycle and P&F
- Some health warnings about data and some information on quartiles, value for money and data presentation
- Understanding scorecards – information on how to read a Harrow scorecard, explaining the columns and terms such as status, thresholds and polarity
- Understanding scorecards – an exercise where data was revealed quarter by quarter and Members discussed areas of concern
- Practical examples – some real examples of how P&F has used and challenged performance information.

The session was well received and we plan to offer it to new councillors after the next election.

Centre for Public Scrutiny Regional Scrutiny Support Programme

Harrow scrutiny contributes to, and is a participating authority, in the CfPS Regional Scrutiny Support Programme. As part of this, Harrow scrutiny members have attended member development events on the following subjects:

Effective Scrutiny in a Brave New World (October 2012)

This event aimed to:

- Support and encourage networking and joint/cross-borough activity across London;
- Enable members to share experiences, identify innovative approaches and good practice, and explore how scrutiny can be most effective; and
- Promote and defend the role of scrutiny and support members at a time of change and limited resources

Getting Maximum Value from Scrutiny (March 2012)

This event was a practical session, giving more time for participants to engage in group work, share views and experiences, identify challenges and examples of good practice, and learn about ways of making scrutiny more effective.

Participants attended one of two workshops:

- choosing what to scrutinise;
- getting the most from questioning in the scrutiny session.

Looking Ahead

Next year is the final year of the 2010/14 administration and whilst there may not be a significant amount of member development planned for current members, the scrutiny team will be working to devise a programme of events which will support new councillors following the elections in 2014. Current scrutiny members will play a vital role in devising this programme

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Report from the Call-In Sub-Committee

On **1st October 2012** the Call-In sub committee met to consider the decision made by cabinet with regard to the Public Realm Integrated Services Model taken on 13th September that:

'(1) the implementation of the Transformation Project for the Public Realm Integrated Services Model, as set out in the Full Business Case, be agreed;

(2) the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety, take the necessary actions to implement the Project.'

The decision had been called-in by nine Members of the Council and 150 members of the public

The call in was made on the grounds that:

- Inadequate consultation took place with stakeholders prior to the decision
- There was an absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision
- There had been insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice

The sub committee resolved unanimously that:

- 1) The call in on the grounds that inadequate consultation took place with stakeholders prior to the decision not be upheld
- 2) The call in on the grounds that there was an absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision not be upheld
- 3) The call in on the grounds that there had been insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice be upheld, as there was no evidence of legal advice having been provided or considered in the body of the Part One report.
- 4) That cabinet give consideration to the inclusion of a paragraph on 'Legal Implications in the Cabinet report template

On **6th December** the Call-In sub committee met to consider the decision made by Cabinet on 22nd November that:

'(1) having considered the proposed terms which have been negotiated, provisionally agreed and recommended by officers, Option 1¹, set out in the report, be agreed;

(2) the Corporate Director of Place Shaping, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts, be authorised to conclude contractual arrangements on the basis of Option 1 and the heads of terms set out in the report.'

The decision had been called in by 9 Members of the Council.

The call in was made on the grounds that:

- Inadequate consultation took place with stakeholders prior to the decision
- There was an absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision
- There had been insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice

¹ Option one -

The sub committee resolved by a majority decision that

- 1) The call in on the grounds that inadequate consultation took place with stakeholders prior to the decision not be upheld
- 2) The call in on the grounds that there was an absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision not be upheld

And unanimously that:

- 3) The call in on the grounds that there had been insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice not be upheld



Cllr Jerry Miles
Chairman Call-In Sub-Committee



Cllr Paul Osborn
Vice Chairman Call-In Sub-Committee

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Conclusion

Our purpose and the challenges which we face in delivering this remain the same: The significant reductions in public sector spending and the associated reductions in service delivery mean that the effectiveness of scrutiny in ensuring that the right decisions are being made is paramount. We will continue to rise to this challenge and to support the organisation to make the right decisions in these very difficult times.

Contact us

There's lots of ways of getting in touch with Harrow's scrutiny function:

- Our web pages can be found at www.harrow.gov.uk/scrutiny
- Our Facebook page can be found here <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Scrutiny-in-Harrow/205146626189923>
- Our Twitter page can be found here <https://mobile.twitter.com/account>
- You can email us at scrutiny@harrow.gov.uk
- You can phone us on **020 8420 9387**
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Appendix One: Satisfaction Survey – Results and Responses

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