

REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date:	22 nd October 2013
Subject:	Scrutiny Lead Member Report
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Families Policy Lead Councillor – to be confirmed• Cllr Victoria Silver, Children and Families Performance Lead Councillor• Environment and Enterprise Policy Lead Councillor – to be confirmed• Cllr Phillip O'Dell, Environment and Enterprise Performance Lead Councillor• Cllr Jerry Miles, Corporate Resources Policy Lead Councillor• Corporate Resources Performance Lead Councillor – to be confirmed
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 Sub-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 for Children and Families and Environment and Enterprise.

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 ENVIRONMENT AND ENTERPRISE Note of Briefing, Tuesday 27th August

Present: Councillor O'Dell,
Caroline Bruce, Philip Hamberger, Lynne Margetts

Apologies Councillor Wright, Simone Van Elk

Update on Towards Excellence Programme

The Corporate Director advised that the governance for the programme is now in place with project managers and project sponsors for each of the project areas:

- Restructure of the Directorate
- New Ways of Working
- Technology
- Service improvement
- Service review

The programme board expects to start meeting within the next couple of weeks and will comprise:

- Corporate Director
- Interim Head of Development and Improvement
- Project sponsors
- Capita/BARTEC – as delivery partners
- Communications

Restructure

With regard to appointments at the senior level - Divisional Director and Service Manager - only 4 vacancies remain. It is the intention to fill these vacancies internally, offering second opportunities to officers who were previously unsuccessful. The Corporate Director clarified that this would not indicate a lowering of standards but would mean that officers who had not previously had much experience of interview techniques might be able to approach the interview in a more positive way.

Consultation on the structure below these senior posts closes on 28th August.

The Corporate Director explained that in some circumstances, services which had previously been combined would now be separated and managed under different teams. Cllr O'Dell queried whether this would result in the dilution of one of the key principles of PRISM which had been combining of some of the front line task into the responsibilities of single officers. It was felt that this would not be the case. The Corporate Director felt that the full multi-tasking model which had been envisaged in the PRISM model might be a little ambitious in Harrow and that a more phased approach, utilising the improved technology through which to support greater cross-profession communication might be more successful.

Technology/New Ways of Working

The Interim Head of Development and Improvement advised councillors of the programme of workshops which have taken place. The more inclusive approach taken in these workshops has resulted in greater understanding of the technological changes and thus greater buy-in to the proposed changes and greater engagement in the development of the technologies.

Cllr O'Dell asked whether any further savings are anticipated. The Corporate Director clarified that, whilst there are no more specific savings, the 'pause' had meant that there have been delays in delivering existing targets. Negotiations with Capita are underway with regard to mitigating these costs

For Action

Cllrs O'Dell and Wright to be provided with a time table for delivery of all of the projects included in the Towards Excellence Programme

Regeneration Strategy

The Corporate Director advised that a draft regeneration strategy is being prepared and is likely to be presented to the Corporate Strategic Board (CSB) in September. As the regeneration process requires input from across the council, this early discussion at CSB and cross council involvement is considered vital to the successful development of the strategy. Once agreed at CSB, the strategy will then be presented to each of the political groups. The Corporate Director feels that it is crucial that there is political support for the fundamental principles of this significant policy, particularly in the context of the local elections in 2014.

Cllr O'Dell asked if the strategy will be applicable on a borough-wide basis or whether there will be scope within the document for geographical or community priorities. The Corporate Director advised that, at this stage the document which will be produced will be a high-level, broad-brush document comprising 3 broad themes: Business; Places and People which will be used to analyse the borough as a whole. Once drafted, the document will be discussed with each of the political groups to get a sense of their priorities should they form the administration after the local elections in 2014. These discussions are likely to take place in October

Improvement Board Papers

Cllr O'Dell sought clarification of a number of issues included in the improvement board papers:

The Corporate director explained that the corporate scorecard is being 'tweaked' to be more outcome focussed and linked to the corporate plan. She also explained that priority indicators will in future reflect the priorities included in the corporate plan.

Further information on the outcome of the Green Deal Carbon Reduction programme will be available in the next few weeks – the figures are being finalised and have reflected a methodological change. Cllr O'Dell requested a more detailed briefing when the final figures are available.

The provision of public space for the Town Centre (Lyon Road) is currently subject to consultation but the proposal appears to have been generally well received. The project will be 'developer funded' which may result in delays to the project. In order to address this, permission is being sought to draw funding forward and implement some of the proposals pending receipt of future S106 monies.

Recycling rates have declined, partly as a result in the reduced context within which waste can be recycled. Whilst there are no specific resources to promote recycling, the establishment of the community engagement team in E&E may be able to assist.

Long term sickness rates are increasing within the directorate, whilst they are increasing across the organisation, the increase in E&E is greater than other directorates. The Corporate Director advised that all cases are being reviewed individually and that managers are being trained and supported in dealing with long term sickness issues.

For Action

A briefing to be arranged to consider the results of the Green Deal Carbon Reduction programme when available.

Information from the Corporate Director

The Corporate Director advised:

- The draft Regeneration Strategy will be available for the Overview and Scrutiny committee in November
- A paper on regeneration of North Harrow will be considered by the O&S committee on 17th September
- A paper on the Excite project, addressing long term unemployment has been scheduled for October

CHILDREN AND FAMILY LEAD MEMBERS BRIEFING

4TH SEPTEMBER 2013

PRESENT

- Cllr Christine Bednell, Policy Lead Children and Families
- Cllr Victoria Silver, Performance Lead Children and Families
- Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children and Families Services
- Melissa Caslake, Divisional Director Targeted Services
- David Harrington, Service Manager, Performance Management
- Mike Howes, Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships
- Fola Irikefe, Scrutiny Officer

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)

The Service Manager, Policy and Partnership presented a briefing on MOPAC funding. A number of funding streams were brought under MOPAC that used to be under the Home Office. The briefing detailed the principles for MOPAC London crime reduction and Safer Harrow's bid for funding. Councillor Silver enquired over how 'stop and search' was working in the borough. The Service Manager, Policy and Partnership explained that stop and search clearly has its uses as a preventative measure to deter crime but it can also alienate some young people. The Youth Parliament are currently carrying out work with the police giving advice on how to avoid stop and search. Councillor Silver expressed that she welcomed the 'stop and search' work being done and commended the Youth Parliament.

In terms of crime prevention there has been a reduction in the number of first time entrants. It is believed that youth work and family work through early intervention and targeting by working with households that have been identified as having challenges has helped to reduce first time offending.

Councillors enquired over whether Harrow Shield (a project to reduce and prevent violence against women and girls) had identified whether self harm was on the increase. It was explained that there is clearly a crossover between those in violent relationships and those self harming but it is unclear whether there has been an increase. The Corporate Director Children and Families Services expressed that there is a challenge when it comes to young people committing violence against other young people in abusive relationships and this figure is on the increase. This increase may be due to an increase in reporting.

It was enquired over what was being done by the council about the increase in young people in abusive relationships. The Corporate Director Children and Families Services explained that Harrow Women's Centre (WISH) and also CAMHS have done some work funded through health services. A young women's domestic violence worker role had recently been created. A Vulnerable Young People's Panel has also been established under the LSCB to look at the issues. The Vulnerable Young People's Panel is a multi agency panel involving children's, health, police and CAMHS. Members were told that

from the panel that was held in the week, four referrals came from girls who are looked after children. Information regarding the panel had been sent out to schools to see whether from this further referrals come through.

The Corporate Director Children and Families Services said it was very much an issue of educating young people that violent relationships aren't acceptable. It is a national issue and there are questions over what more can be done by schools and also councils. Work is currently underway to try and identify those at risk and this is challenging as it is peer to peer violence, not often reported. Councillor Bednell explained that many of the children encountered through fostering and adoption often come from a background where violence and abuse is prevalent. The LSCB are planning to do something to further educate young people.

Data Update

The Service Manager for Performance Management provided an update on young people with SEN being supported by the YOT. Councillor Silver enquired over what the underlying issues for the young people being supported by the YOT with SEN were to which she was informed that often many of the young people have ADHD.

It was explained to members that in the case of the amount of young carers that there are in the borough, only one person is known to officers and has identified themselves as a carer. Councillor Silver explained that she was aware that some schools are holding young carer to young carer forum's and enquired over which schools were doing it well and how it was being monitored especially in view of the fact that many schools were now turning into academies.

The Corporate Director Children and Families Services explained that the councils role in the management of schools was mainly to deal with poor performance as essentially schools are governed by themselves. They have always been self governing and so the council is only able to influence big projects. Schools have devolved budgets but most secondary schools have not historically used this to invest in pastoral care.

Follow up action: Further work to try and gain a better picture on the number of young carers in the borough.

Councillor Bednell suggested that schools could possibly be influenced in looking closer at the role of young carers through the training that is provided to Governors of schools.

Follow up action: Officers agreed that they will follow up and look into including something on how schools can reach out to young carers through the training for Governors.

Councillor Silver enquired over what was being done specifically in terms of restorative justice. The Divisional Director Targeted Services explained that it is quite hard to find the balance in terms of ensuring that people understand the seriousness of the offence they have committed when implementing

restorative justice procedure. Restorative justice methods currently used includes perpetrators talking to victims.

The Child's Journey: Making a difference – Improvement Plan

The Corporate Director Children and Families Services presented the Child's Journey improvement plan which details what the service hopes to achieve in relation to the protection of vulnerable children in the borough. The LSCB will be responsible for carrying out the public interface for the improvement plan. Members were also informed that Children's Services were likely to be inspected again in December 2013. The Corporate Director Children and Families Services explained further that there is a lot of work being done in terms of staff development including a range of posters that have been put up throughout the department.

Members were advised that there are 24 more children coming into care at the moment. In comparison to other similar borough's, this number is still low and the increase may possibly be as a result of the action plan.

Recruitment and retention is still a major issue for the council and the package we offer isn't competitive enough. There is a nationwide issue with social workers recruitment and retention, there is a real demand for good children and family social workers and so local authorities have to offer an attractive package to get the best officer's.

Councillor Silver enquired whether there was training in place to bring up a certain cohort of social workers already in the council. The Divisional Director for Targeted Services expressed that something that is working well and is well developed in the service is the training. There is a clear plan in place to develop and grow social workers internally. The Corporate Director Children and Families Services further explained that there was a separate workforce strategy being developed and the recommendations of the Munroe review had been implemented.

BRIEFING - SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS RESOURCES

4TH SEPTEMBER 2013, 5 pm

Present:

Councillor Jerry Miles (policy lead member Resources), Councillor Tony Ferrari (Chairman P&F), Councillor Sue Anderson (Vice-chair P&F)

Tom Whiting (Corporate Director Resources), Simon George (Director of Finance and Assurance), Fern Silverio (Head of Collections & Housing Benefits), Martin Randall (Senior Professional Corporate Performance and Planning), Simone van Elk (Scrutiny Officer)

NOTES

The new structure of the Resources Directorate

The Corporate Director of Resources informed members that the new divisional director for procurement is starting in September and will be presenting a report on procurement to Cabinet in October and the Performance & Finance scrutiny sub-committee in November.

Councillor Miles asked about plans to expand the legal services to a third London Borough. The Corporate Director of Resources explained that the decision by a potential partner has been delayed until November.

Debt collection

The Head of Collections & Housing Benefits informed members about a trial process for debt collection for 500 residents who are paying council tax for the first time. Several soft letters are sent as reminders of the required payment before formal letters. If people then haven't paid, they are sent a letter as well as telephoned to inform them about upcoming court order and that they can attend a surgery shortly before court date. At the surgery, Council officers from Finance and Housing will offer advice as well as bailiffs. People have the opportunity to pay at the surgery without incurring extra costs. On the day of court there is another opportunity to pay before the court starts.

Councillor Ferrari asked whether any escalation of cases happens before bailiffs become involved. The Head of Collections & Housing Benefits advised that unpaid cases are cross referenced against the Council's data for adult social care, mental health care, child protection services, etc to check residents' vulnerability. A protocol is being developed about the sharing of this information including criteria to establish the vulnerability of residents. A draft policy will be presented to Cabinet later this year. The new process for collection will combine the Council's principles for the recovery of debt with the vulnerability criteria.

Councillor Ferrari asked whether information could be provided at the September O&S committee that shows the effectiveness of each step in this trial debt collection process.

Action: Head of Collections & Housing Benefits to provide the O&S committee with the number of residents that have paid their debt after each individual step in the debt collection process.

Performance of Resources directorate

The quarter 1 performance scorecard for the Resources Directorate was discussed:

Councillor Anderson asked to what extent FOI requests are used to obtain information that could have been obtained in a more conventional way. The Corporate Director advised that requests came from a variety of sources and were generally increasing in complexity but there is a threshold equivalent to 18 hours' work before a charge could be made. The requests were often for data structured in a different way from that in which it was held.

Councillor Anderson asked for more information about the nature of crime included in the performance measure on violent crime and the police response to the increase.

Action: The Senior Professional Corporate Performance and Planning provide Members with information about the types or crimes that make up the performance indicator on violent crime.

Councillor Anderson asked about the change in the performance measure on accident incident rate between quarter 4 2012-14 and quarter 1 2013-14. The Senior Professional Corporate Performance and Planning informed members that the measure previously contained the number of incidents (67 in quarter 4 of 2012-13) but is now expressed as a rate per 1,000 employees.

Action: The Senior Professional Corporate Performance and Planning provide Members with the new definitions of the performance measure on the accident incident rate and comparable information for quarter 1 2013-14 and previous quarters.

Councillor Anderson expressed concern that only 65% of staff were trained on information security. The Corporate Director advised members that this would be improved once compliance software was working which sends email reminders and warns of sanctions.