

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

18 FEBRUARY 2014

Chairman: * Councillor Sue Anderson

Councillors: † Mano Dharmarajah * Chris Mote
* Graham Henson * Anthony Seymour

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

171. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance. Apologies were received from Councillor Mano Dharmarajah.

172. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Items 8 & 10 – Revenue and Capital Monitoring Quarter 3; Children's Services Performance

Councillor Chris Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his wife was a school teacher at a Harrow School and she was Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 8 – Revenue & Capital Monitoring Quarter 3

Councillor Sue Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that her son was in receipt of support from Supporting People. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

173. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2014 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

174. Public Questions, Petitions and References from Council and other Committees/Panels

RESOLVED: To note that none were received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

175. Chair's Report

The Sub-Committee received a report which set out issues considered by the Chair since the last meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

A Member queried whether the Towards Excellence initiative had had an impact on the timetable of inspections of food premises and improving the co-ordination of visits across the Directorate. An officer undertook to provide this information to Members after the meeting.

The Member queried the recording of reasons for staff absences due to illness. He asked whether the underlying reasons for lack of recording reasons for absence were being adequately addressed and added that the last Quarterly Report did not flag up this issue. An officer undertook to provide further information regarding this after the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

176. Revenue & Capital Monitoring Quarter 3

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Finance and Assurance, which had been previously considered at Cabinet on 13 February 2014. The report set out the Council's revenue and capital monitoring position for Quarter 3 as at 31 December 2014.

The Director stated that there was an overall forecast overspend in each of the Directorates amounting to £1.903m and this figure had increased by £0.02m since Quarter 2. Directorates were facing challenging times and were continuing to take action to mitigate these pressures, which were monitored and reported in a timely way.

A Member asked whether the Department for Education (DfE) took into account the increase in pupil numbers and increase in pupils with special needs, when allocating schools funding. The Director of Finance and Assurance advised that the Schools Revenue Funding Settlement from the DfE did take into account the numbers of pupils and provided additional funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

The Member queried the £0.115m legacy of outstanding debts from the CCG. The Director stated that the Council would continue to negotiate for the settlement of these outstanding debts.

A Member queried the £3.268m carry-forward figure. The Director advised that any under spends on revenue budgets could be designated as reserve funds and carried forward with the agreement of the relevant Portfolio Holder. He added that the under spend had been identified at the 2012/13 year-end, which was after the budget setting process.

The Member also queried the figures relating to bad debt provisions. The Director stated that these figures had remained consistent for a number of years and that some debts might not be written off at the end of the year. The figures included provision for items such as employee claims, insurance and legal costs.

A Member asked whether anticipated parking income, which was projected to be £1.3m by the end of 2014 was still on track. The Director undertook to check current figures and to forward the information to the Sub-Committee. The Member also queried the increase in the costs of administering an additional 20,000 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and under achieved summons income due to fewer summonses being issued. The Director advised that no virement had been done in this case.

The Member queried the £0.5m figure which had not yet been built into the forecast, arising from cases referred on to Adult Services from the CCG. The Director advised that half of these cases were historical cases of continuing care. The Health and Wellbeing Board was looking at what proportion of the CCG's funding should be apportioned to the Council. There would need to be further discussions regarding how best to use funds in the Business Risk Reserve to offset this.

A Member queried the forecast overspend in the Library and Leisure Services. The Director stated that the figures related to the period prior to the implementation of the joint Libraries and Leisure Contract.

A Member stated that, at a previous meeting, he had queried the budget overspend in the Mayoralty and asked to know the current position regarding this. The Director advised that it was his understanding that the Mayor's engagement events were not easily predictable as the Mayoralty had to be responsive to requests from the public. However, the recent implementation of a civic calendar of events for the Mayor would help reduce costs.

The Chair queried the speed at which savings had been made in the Supporting People service. She also queried the adverse variance in the figures relating to Public Health. The Director stated that the health budget was ring-fenced but that the Council had inherited a complicated contract from the NHS and most London authorities were in a similar position. He undertook to circulate further details regarding the early savings in the Supporting People service to the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

177. Performance and Finance Annual Report

Sub-Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning which set out the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee sections of the Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

178. Children's Services Performance

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Families which set out performance information for the Directorate. Officers from Children and Families advised that the performance scorecards detailed in the report had been compiled by the Business Intelligence Team in the Resources Directorate, giving an independent view of performance. A large data set had been considered in compiling the report

The officers highlighted the following areas of the report:

- Children's Services was the most inspected and regulated service area of local authorities;
- current issues flagged up in the report included pressures on service delivery due to demographic pressures and an increase in the threshold for referrals to social care, which had led to almost double the rate of referrals and assessments that the service was dealing with;
- there was an 18% vacancy rate in the service, partly due to and the national shortage of skilled social workers. However, all of the Service Manager posts and most of the vacant Team Manager posts had now been filled. A number of measures such as improved learning and development, improved planning related to workforce needs, a fast-track route for graduates were being implemented to mitigate against this;
- following an inspection, the Early years and Social Care services had received positive feedback and inspectors had highlighted four distinct areas of good practice;
- the implementation of an attendance intervention model had succeeded in reducing unauthorised pupil absences from schools;
- 92% of Harrow's schools had been rated as good or above, with four schools rated as requiring improvement and one rated as inadequate. The Harrow Schools Improvement Partnership and the Education Strategy and School Organisation teams were working closely with schools on improvement plans. The Virtual School was making good progress;

- recent Care Quality Commission inspections of safeguarding in health partners had raised some concerns. The CQC had yet to publish the report regarding this;
- health checks for Children Looked After (CLAs) had fallen below expected levels;
- the Youth Offending Service teams had made good progress in meeting targets set in the improvement plan, however, a number of ongoing IT issues had caused a dip in indicators which was affecting outcomes for young offenders and the improvement plan.

A Member queried the substantial increase in referrals to social care. An officer advised that Harrow compared well with its statistical neighbours in this area. The increase was due in part to the lowering of the threshold, families with high levels of need relocating to outer London boroughs and the increasingly complex needs of children in the borough.

A Member asked whether any young people from Harrow were in secure accommodation. An officer advised that there were none.

A Member queried the £0.815m overspend in the Directorate. An officer advised that there was an overall income shortfall of £3m due to loss of income from hiring of the Teachers' Centre and costs related to the Special Needs Transport service. The Director undertook to provide a more detailed breakdown of the figures to the Sub-Committee.

A Member asked about the low rates of children subject to a child protection plan for more than two years. An officer stated that the number of children had been flagged up by the OFSTED inspection of 2012. She added that the number of children on protection plans had increased, however, the numbers on the list for more than two years had reduced, which indicated that cases were being progressed more quickly.

A Member queried the fact that the percentage of repeat referrals had reduced, however, the number assessed within 45-days had increased. An officer advised that this reflected the increased pressure on the service. While the percentage of assessments completed within 45 days had been below target in previous months, performance had significantly improved during December 2013 to 90% for that month. This situation was being closely monitored.

The Chair queried the figures relating to Health Checks for CLAs. The officer advised that 90% of health reviews would be completed for children who had been looked after for more than one year and that the main problems were with initial health checks for new CLA. The Chair requested that the Sub-Committee re-visit the issues of initial Health Checks for CLAs and the final results of CQC inspection of safeguarding in health partners.

The Chair asked what remedial action had been taken in relation to the YOT and how soon the team were expected to be back on track. An officer stated

that this was being overseen by the Children's Improvement Board. An officer added that Capita were in discussions with the software providers regarding this issue. The Chair requested that performance of the YOT be added to the Scrutiny Watch list.

The Chair congratulated the Children and Families Directorate for the improvements in performance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

179. Third Sector Strategy Update: Presentation

The Sub-Committee received a presentation regarding the Third Sector Strategy, given by the Divisional Director of Community and Culture and the Chair of the Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF).

The Divisional Director stated that the Strategy had been agreed by Cabinet in April 2012. It had identified a set of key actions which were aimed at deepening partnerships, building capacity in the Third Sector and increasing opportunities for Third Sector involvement in the design and delivery of public services. This had been supported by a series of public engagement events.

The Chair of the VSF stated that the VSF was a mutual support network that was evolving and developing with support from the Council. It was intended that the revised Strategy would help to unlock the social capital of existing and new social support networks, forge new partnerships and improve the wellbeing and resilience of all our communities.

A Member asked whether a review of needs that were currently unmet had been carried out. He also asked how activity would be prioritised and how duplication of work would be avoided. The Divisional Director advised that these issues would be fully explored at a forthcoming workshop with the Sector planned for March 2014.

A Member asked about staffing levels within the Community and Culture Section. The Divisional Director advised that the Section comprised three members of staff.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

180. Exclusion of the Press and Public

That, in accordance with Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item for the reason set out below:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reason</u>
12	ICT Disaster Recovery	Information under paragraph 1 (contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including

the authority holding that information).

13 Business Continuity

Information under paragraph 1 (contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

181. ICT Disaster Recovery

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation, which set out the current position with regard to ICT Disaster Recovery (DR). An officer stated that migration of the Council's IT systems to Citrix, once completed, would enable a more flexible DR response.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

182. Business Continuity

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Finance & Assurance which set out the current position on Business Continuity (BC) activity.

An officer advised that the current overarching BC Plan and supporting Directorate plans had been agreed in 2010 and were reviewed every 2-3 years. The full review initiated in 2013 was almost complete. He added that the Council's BC plans were benchmarked annually.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.03 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SUE ANDERSON
Chair