

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

24 FEBRUARY 2015

Chair:	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
Councillors:	* Ghazanfar Ali * Richard Almond * Jeff Anderson * Michael Borio	* Kam Chana * Chris Mote * Paul Osborn * Kiran Ramchandani
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) Mrs J Rammelt † Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) † Mrs A Khan
Non-voting Co-opted:	Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
In attendance: (Councillors)	Simon Brown Pamela Fitzpatrick Graham Henson Barry Kendler	Minute 73 Minute 74 Minute 71 Minute 75

- * Denotes Member present
- † Denotes apologies received

66. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

71. Corporate Plan 2015/16

The Committee received a report which contained the proposed Corporate Plan for 2014-19 which set out the Council's strategic direction, vision and priorities for the next four years. It incorporated the Council's Corporate Equality Objectives

The Chair advised the Committee that the report had already been considered by the Cabinet and that the Corporate Plan would be finalised at the Council meeting on 26 February 2015. The Committee were being asked to provide comments that would be forwarded to the Council meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources & Policy Development introduced the report and made the following points:

- Moving to a 4 year Corporate Plan was intended to provide stability;
- the Corporate Plan set out the vision for the Council's direction, alongside the Council's ambitions;
- the summary contained the 'golden thread' of 'Making A Difference' and set out both what to do and how to do it;
- the intention to 'mainstream' the Equalities agenda had been achieved with the inclusion of the Corporate Equalities Objectives in the Corporate Plan.

A Member noted the commitment to 'engage with residents differently' and asked how the Council would move towards a new model of local government in which residents were more involved. The Portfolio Holder responded that the process had begun with the 'Take Part' consultation, and would continue as the Council considered how to improve engagement and response rates. The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning, added that a research project would seek to identify the best means of improving engagement and involvement.

A Member noted that £31m had been secured for regeneration in the heart of Harrow, and that a pilot scheme was in place to tackle rogue landlords. The Portfolio Holder agreed that these projects were good news. He added that the licensing scheme would be monitored for its effectiveness.

A Member queried how the success of planned outcomes would be measured as there were no targets contained in the Corporate Plan. The Portfolio Holder and Divisional Director explained that these would be contained in the corporate scorecard which would be reported to Cabinet quarterly.

A Member commented that the proposal to change the petition scheme, and reduce the threshold for the number of signatures required to trigger a debate

went against the stated objective to improve engagement. In his view the petition scheme as it stood had been very successful in garnering public opinion and engagement in issues that mattered to residents and he could not understand why it was necessary to change a successful mechanism for engagement. The Portfolio Holder replied that the terms could be changed if necessary. The Member added that plans to reduce the amount of scrutiny taking place would lose yet another opportunity for engagement.

A Member queried the stated ambition of the Council, in that the Corporate Plan aimed to be 'one of the safest boroughs', when in fact statistics showed that Harrow was considered to be the safest London borough. The Divisional Director explained the statistical analysis and stressed that the ambition to remain at the top had not changed. However, he believed that the perception and fear of crime remained high despite the facts, and work would continue to address this.

A Member asked how the Council would verify its commitment that Labour Members would work in the community. The Portfolio Holder pointed out that the commitment was to do a minimum of 50 hours over the year, and that many councillors did more.

A Member asked what measures were in place to support the commercial sector in Harrow. The Portfolio Holder responded that work was ongoing to promote apprenticeships, local procurement, and requirements for contractors to recruit locally. This would all support increased employment, which would in turn improve commercial activity. Another Member commented that it was equally important to retain what already existed in the small town centres.

A Member asked whether parks were accounted for in the Plan. The Portfolio Holder reiterated that with savings of £83m to be made, hard decisions had to be made. The Council would invest in services for the vulnerable, such as the Youth Offending Team, Adult Services, and the Under 5s but could not support every service. It was possible that regeneration and increased income could produce some mitigation, but he was also of the view that attitudes to litter had to change, with the public taking more responsibility for their actions.

In response to queries about named commitments not being explained elsewhere in the Plan, the Portfolio Holder stated that the current model of local government was not sustainable. It would be necessary to empower local communities and devolve some decision making. He agreed that in such circumstances it may well prove possible that a community could take on the responsibility to maintain a local park.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Committee's comments be considered.