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| Meeting: | Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| Date: | 22 nd November 2005 |
| Subject: | Update on current reviews |
| Responsible Officer: | Director of Organisational Performance |
| Contact Officer: | Lynne McAdam, Service Manager Scrutiny |
| Portfolio Holder: | Communications, Partnership and HR |
| Key Decision: | No |
| Status: | Part 1 |

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

To note progress made so far on the reviews currently underway.

Reason for report

At their meeting on 10 October, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a recommendation on the item "Principles of Scrutiny" that regular progress reports on reviews be formally submitted to sub-committees as a standing item.

Benefits

It is critical to maintain careful oversight and management of all review project plans. This report will potentially improve communication not only within the council (both officer and political groups) but will also keep residents informed and potentially engaged. Consideration of this report will mean that the review's work so far can be examined and challenged against the previously agreed scopes.

Cost of Proposals

The cost of appointment of an independent HR consultant is estimated as £5170 - £800 per day plus expenses. This compares well with the other quotations received. This report is not seeking additional financial resources. Scrutiny reviews will be delivered within existing budget provision for scrutiny activity.

Risks

If the committee does not note this report:

- (1) The committee would not be fully exercising its responsibilities in overseeing the review.
- (2) The review would not benefit from the external challenge which discussion of this report will provide.

Implications if recommendations rejected

The “Principles of Scrutiny”, agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, would be undermined

The review would not be able to progress effectively.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

MMR Review

At its July meeting, Overview and Scrutiny committee agreed the scope for this further review, which includes consideration of:

- Outcomes from both Phase One and Phase Two of the MMR
- Impact upon staff who went through the process, including staff who have been through the process but have still not been placed in a new position
- Impact of MMR on rest of the organisation
- VFM

Since the agreement to expedite the evidence-gathering phase of the review a programme of round table discussions and focus groups have been agreed as follows:

- Round table with panel of experts in the field to set the standards and to advise members of what such a process would be expected to deliver - 15th November. The confirmed membership of this panel will include:
 - Paul Tarplett, Director, National and Local Services, OPM
 - Andy Jennings, Deputy Chief Executive, LB Islington
 - Lynne Butler, Employers Organisation
 - Nick Walkley, Director of Resources, LB Barnet
- Round table with Chief Executive and Executive Directors to discuss the strength, weaknesses, risks and aspirations for the process - 17th November

- Facilitated focus group discussion with members of Executive Directorate Management Teams to discuss the strength, weaknesses, risks and aspirations for the process. This will be held on 21st November
- Round table meeting with representatives of Unison to hear representations of their members concerns. This will be held on 24th November.
- Focus groups with:
 - Staff who have been successfully appointed through the process
 - Staff who were unsuccessful and remained in the council
 - Staff who were unsuccessful and left the council
 - Officers managing the process
 These focus groups have been arranged for 30th November, 7th December and 13th December

In addition to these focus groups, statistical information with regard to sickness levels and turnover has been provided for the period during which the process has been running. Performance information for the same period has also been requested. An assessment of this information will enable the review to derive objective contextual information against which to assess the strengths or weakness of the MMR process.

A number of staff focus groups have been set up by the Council's Organisational Development team and it has been agreed that these focus groups will be surveyed for an opinion with regard to the performance of the organisation and the level of staff morale.

An independent HR consultant has also been engaged to support the review and guide the development of the key lines of enquiry.

'Hear/Say' - making a difference through listening and talking

The scope of the Hear Say review (formerly Community Engagement) was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny in July and included:

- To review the existing practices and mechanisms used by the Council to engage the community
- To obtain community input into this review
- To consider best practice and innovation in community engagement
- To consider Harrow's performance against best practice
- To formulate good practice recommendations for submission to the Executive

The majority of the evidence gathering for this review and its associated case studies has now been completed and the review's main conclusions, findings and recommendations are being drafted for submission to the Corporate Management Team in December in order that any corporate high level recommendations can be considered in the budget setting process. Final meetings with external experts and with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder are taking place in November and will contribute to the final content of the report.

The final full report will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny committee in January.

2.2 Options considered

Options available to the Sub-Committee are outlined in section 2.1.

2.3 Consultation

A central component of each of these reviews is effective consultation with stakeholders.

2.4 Financial Implications

This cost will be met from within the existing scrutiny budget.

2.5 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

2.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no health and safety implications associated with this report.

2.8 Section 17 Implications

There are no Section 17 implications associated with this report.

2.9 Equalities Impact

When considering the scope and format of its activity, the Sub-Committee takes into consideration how to engage with and meet the diverse needs of residents. It is effective consultation with all groups, particularly those potentially harder to reach, is a fundamental focus of the community engagement review.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

None.