

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

9 DECEMBER 2015

Chair:	* Councillor Phillip O'Dell	
Councillors:	* Richard Almond	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane
	* Mrs Chika Amadi (1)	* Primesh Patel
In attendance: (Councillors)	Sue Anderson	Minute 54
	Simon Brown	Minute 52
	Anne Whitehead	Minute 52

* Denotes Member present
(1) Denotes category of Reserve Members

47. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Jeff Anderson	Councillor Chika Amadi

48. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 9 – Adult Services Complaints Annual Report (Social Care Only) 2014-2015

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was the Portfolio Holder during the first three months of the period covered

by the report. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 11 – Community Grants Scheme 2014-2015

Councillor Richard Almond declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a Council appointed representative on the Citizens Advice Bureau. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Sue Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a Council appointed representative on the Harrow Heritage Trust . She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was employed by the Citizens Advice Bureau. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

49. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2015, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

50. Public Questions, Petitions and References from Council and Other Committees/Panels

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put or petitions or references received at this meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

51. Revenue and Capital Monitoring

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of Finance on the revenue and capital monitoring for quarter 2 as at 30 September 2015, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 10 December 2015.

Following a brief overview of the report by the Director of Finance, Members asked the following questions and received responses from the officer:

Q – Why was the RAG (red, amber, green) tracker key used in the report different to that used elsewhere in the Council? Could consideration be given to the inclusion of low red, high red and direction of travel to enable more detailed consideration?

A – The blue rating indicated that the saving had been achieved and banked and therefore further review was not required. It was noted that direction of travel was discussed in relation to performance analysis and was not used in quarterly budget monitoring. The information provided by Finance was in the form of a commentary rather than ‘ups and downs’.

- Q – Why was it necessary to draw from contingency monies, why were there so many contingency funds and how did separate funds help in managing finances?
- A – Contingency funds were created for specific reasons because the use of one general fund could not identify that expenditure complied with the intended use. Any combination of such funds would defeat this purpose. The provision of greater detail on the contingency funds aimed to prevent complications at the year end. The system improved accountability for Corporate Directors.
- Q – As two months had elapsed since the production of the second quarter information, could updates be circulated at the meeting in order to update the information? Could consideration be given to the circulation of the monthly monitoring reports considered by CSB and viewed by Portfolio Holders, therefore ensuring that the Sub-Committee received up to date information to enable timely scrutiny of problem areas? The November report would be relevant for this meeting.
- A – The quarterly monitoring process monitored various budgets at various frequencies based on risk. It was a forecast for the year and had been smoother than previous years. The comments raised would be discussed.
- Q – What percentage determined whether a saving would be unachievable and therefore flagged as red? For example, garden waste remained amber despite a reduction of £850,000 in the saving envisaged.
- A – The garden waste saving could have remained amber because mitigating action had been identified. Delays on the achievement of savings had resulted in one-off in year mitigation.
- Q – What was the timeframe for no draw down until monies were returned to the general fund?
- A – Depending on the type of expenditure, some contingency funds remained until year end at which point it was decided whether transfer to the general contingency fund was appropriate. Contingency funds could not be transferred to the following financial year. An annual review was undertaken as to whether a contingency fund was required for the following financial year. The creation of a number of contingency funds enabled more efficient tracking and aided transparency on their use at year end.
- Q – With regard to CHW03 and BSS01, the report indicated that the review of Business Support Services was not on target but did not indicate the shortfall. What was the effect on the Adults Transformation budget?
- A – The tracker would be updated for the next monitoring report. Paragraph 68 to the report referred to staff savings not being on track and stated that the central scanning project had been delayed pending IT supplier support. Officers continued to explore the reduction of the

projected overspend in the Business Support service for transformation.

Q – Would delays to savings and IT failures relating to the Capita contract be fed back as part of the negotiations at the closing of accounts? The savings for the PRISM project amounted to less than 7% of the intended saving.

A – The departments concerned were required to identify alternative savings. The Chair suggested that the Scrutiny Leads consider the effect of unachieved savings on the Transformation Programme Plan programme and determine whether a scrutiny review would be helpful.

Q – What was the worse case scenario for the School Expansion Programme budget?

A – The worse case scenario was just over £4million and the best case just over £2.5 million, the latter could be covered by the contingency fund. Discussions were taking place with Keepmoat regarding liabilities.

Q – What was the impact on services to residents of the forecast Housing Revenue Account underspend of £11.233m as the cost element was not captured?

A – An examination of the key areas for quarter 3 would provide further information.

Q – Why did paragraph 91 of the report state that the capital programme forecast at quarter 2 was 76% of the total capital whilst paragraph 169 stated that the current projection was 92%?

A – The officer undertook to confirm whether the variation was due to slippage.

The Chair thanked the Director of Finance for her presentation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

52. Children and Families Services' Complaints Annual Report 2014-2015 and Adult Services Complaints Annual Report (Social Care only) 2014-2015

The Corporate Director People introduced the reports and drew the attention of the Sub-Committee to the notable improvement in performance for both the Children and Families Services and Adult Services (Social Care only) annual reports for 2014-2015. It was reported that all priorities had been met.

It was reported that the relative slow escalation rate of complaints between stages of the process reflected the efforts made by officers to understand and address concerns raised as complaints or representations at an early stage. That only one stage 2 complaint for Adult Services had been received during the year, was considered to be as a result of this approach.

The Sub-Committee discussed the increased involvement of MPs and Councillors in complaints. In response to questions, it was reported that it rarely duplicated a public complaint and arose from the introduction of the Councillor portal, complainants dissatisfied with stage 1 results copying them into correspondence when a resolution meeting was offered, and those unaware of the process or who had not experienced one that worked well in another context. The complainant may not have considered writing directly but had had Councillor contact. An officer undertook to circulate the response notification.

Members considered that a questionnaire would be a useful tool in establishing the reasons for the choice to access the process via a MP or Councillor, and to include questions such as what was a positive experience of their contact with the team and what was not quite so positive.

In response to questions, the Sub-Committee was informed that:

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- the 10 working days timescale was in common with neighbouring boroughs. The deadline was extended to 20 days for complex complaints;
- the vast majority of complaints were in relation to social care and were often complex. Some decisions, whilst correctly processed, would not be what the complainant wanted to hear and although the complainant persisted the decision could not be changed.

A Member referred to the increase in African ethnic origin complaints from 4 to 8. It was reported that the data had been interrogated to reduce the number whose ethnic origin was not recorded which had halved in 2014 but had correspondingly resulted in increases within ethnic groups. The officers were working with community groups and younger people to increase the number of complaints received. The Sub-Committee discussed how to empower adult service users to complain as currently all such complaints were made by the relative or partner as the service users were mostly older and it was challenging for them to complain. Work was taking place with the Third Sector and Age UK regarding complaint procedures and social workers distributed leaflets, particularly to those living alone.

The Corporate Director People expressed his appreciation of the officers for the service provided.

RESOLVED: That the annual reports be noted.

53. Equality and Diversity Annual Report

The Sub-Committee received a report which set out the key work undertaken in Harrow to meet the Council's Corporate Equality Objectives in 2014/15, the performance against the related targets, and what areas would be prioritised in 2015/16. The document incorporated the Annual Progress report.

In response to a question as to how the key priority of increasing hate crime reporting would be met, the Sub-Committee was informed it would be by way of a contract with Stophate UK and through the police. Feedback from a community reassurance event with community leaders in response to the Paris attacks indicated an awareness of underreporting. The need to work with community leaders to increase confidence and understand issues was recognised as it was important that the police received evidence, such as a description, in order to prosecute.

A Member stated that it was important to ensure that goals were measurable and that the method of measurement was clear. An officer stated that key areas were first identified, performance objectives created, work planning undertaken and governance structures clear.

As part of a discussion on the priority of changing accepted or tolerated norms to influence behaviour relating to female genital mutilation, the Sub-Committee was informed that the initial step was to raise awareness. The level of risk could be associated in accordance with the proportion of the Harrow population from those areas where FGM was, according to national research, most commonly practised. There was a legal duty to report, and Harrow had moved quickly with regard to FGM in 14/15 by working with schools, being vigilant and assertive whilst working with communities to make change. Members were signposted to other strategic sites such as the Local Safeguarding Board, Safer Harrow and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Employees' Consultative Forum had considered the under-representation on the workforce profile against protected characteristics as pay bands increased, in particular that there were no BAME in the top band. The officer reported that data showed the workforce to be fairly static. The staff survey data indicated nearly double considered themselves to be disabled compared to other sources. Dal Babu, in his 2014 report, had presented a number of recommendations to increase BAME representation in senior management grades. A number of initiatives had been introduced to support this such as targeting the future leadership to BAME employees. The officer would discuss the progression of such initiatives with the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing and Divisional Director HRD & Shared Services. In addition discussion would be undertaken with the Mayor as to how he could raise awareness as part of his role.

RESOLVED: That the progress made against the Corporate Equality Objectives in 2014/15 be noted.;

54. Community Grants Scheme 2014-2015

The Sub-Committee received a report which set out information on the monitoring of projects awarded grant funding in 2014-2015 and presented a summation of service delivery provided by those organisations as part of the end of year monitoring process. It also tried to demonstrate the outcomes delivered to and for the community of Harrow to determine the value that the grants programme had brought to the borough.

The Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning reported that the information provided for both Outcome Based Grants and Small Grants detailed what each organisation received, the amount spent, the targeted beneficiaries and the actual beneficiaries. The appendices, which were not discussed at the meeting, covered the expected impact.

It was noted that a reduction in the staffing resources available for the Community Grants Scheme from 1.5 fte (full time equivalent) to 0.5fte from the start of the 2015 year, which was during the review period, had resulted in there being a number of areas on which officers were still seeking clarification and these were highlighted in the report. The officer also managed the Small Grants Scheme.

The Sub-Committee discussed the monitoring and it was noted that a visit by the funding department normally took place at six months, at which time adjustment could be made as appropriate. The full year monitoring was intended to be a light touch. The Council could require the production of evidence at any time. Members would have the opportunity to feed into a Member led review which included outcomes as the Council wanted to be confident that value for money was obtained.

In response to a question, Members were informed that Harrow Community Action provided website and technical support to the Voluntary Community Sector forum to which all voluntary organisations belonged.

A Member sought information as to the weight given to the determination of identifying the achievement of an activity and it was noted that a formulae was applied to questions on the application form which included the number of possible beneficiaries, the definition of which was broad. The officer undertook to circulate the scoring sheet to Members of the Sub-Committee. When outcome based grants were awarded the Panel did not award 100% so negotiations took place according to the level. A lot of things were being done where there was clear evidence of social good in Harrow.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

55. Termination of meeting

In accordance with the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At 9.55 pm to continue until 10.10 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.10 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR PHILLIP O'DELL
Chair