

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	17 January 2008
Subject:	Scrutiny review of partnership with Accord MP.
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director, Community and Environment Services
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Susan Hall
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Final report of scrutiny review group

## **SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of a scrutiny review group which has investigated the first year's operation of the Accord MP partnership.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a) That the findings of the review be noted.
- b) That the recommendations be endorsed, and their implementation monitored by scrutiny.

### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To contribute towards the strengthening and development of the council's partnership with Accord MP.

## **SECTION 2 - REPORT**

### **Background**

In July 2007, the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee agreed to conduct a review into the first year's operation of the council's partnership with Accord MP to provide public realm infrastructure services. Following the agreement of a scope for the review, members gathered evidence during the autumn of 2007 and have now drafted a final report.

The review looked at a number of issues relating to the position of services before the Accord MP partnership came into effect, the changes that have been made in the past year, and prospects for the future.

In doing so, it concentrated on a number of issues:

- The principles behind partnership working
- Governance
- Performance management and financial control
- Design quality
- Communications

The review received evidence from a number of different individuals and organisations, and carried out investigative work into three case studies – the construction of vehicle crossings, the reconstruction of Uxbridge Road in Stanmore and responsive maintenance (including emergency response).

Five recommendations were made on two of these issues (performance management, communications). They are outlined below.

### **Current situation**

The report has now been drafted.

Ordinarily a scrutiny report would be cleared through (and discussed by) a scrutiny committee prior to submission to Cabinet. In this instance, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny have agreed to waive this requirement. This is because, unless the issue is considered at this meeting, it would likely have to be held over until March Cabinet (on account of budget decisions for 2008/09 taking up the February meeting).

The Chairman of the review group was of the opinion that this would constitute an unacceptable delay and as such the special step of asking Cabinet for their endorsement before formal committee consideration is being taken.

Article 6.03(b) of the Council's Constitution, and O&S Rule 26.3, make it explicit that it is for an O&S Committee to submit reports to Cabinet, this being the agreed method for ensuring that scrutiny's confirmed recommendations are properly considered.

However, Executive Procedure Rule 22.3 states that, "Any non- Executive Member of the Council may request the Leader to put an item on the agenda of

an Executive meeting for consideration. If the Leader agrees, the item will be considered at the next available meeting of the Executive. The notice of the meeting will give the name of the Councillor who asked for the item to be considered. The Councillor will be invited to attend the meeting and may be invited to speak as set out in Rule 20.”

Legal advice has been sought and received which has indicated that, following this rule, Cabinet may consider this scrutiny review report in this instance. Given that this is a departure from existing protocol, the matter was discussed between members and officers at length during December and it is only because of exceptional circumstances – that is, the fact that if O&S Rule 26.3 were adhered to in this case it would result in a delay of more than two months before another opportunity would arise for Cabinet consideration. It was the view of the Chairman of the Review Group, and following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that such a delay would be unacceptable, that has led to this exceptional course of action.

Cabinet’s decision will be reported to a future meeting of a scrutiny committee which will consider the report in detail. Following Cabinet’s decision on the endorsement of the recommendations, work will be carried out between Property and Infrastructure Services and the Scrutiny Unit to discuss how the implementation of those recommendations will be monitored.

### **Why a change is needed**

The detailed reasoning for the recommendations is given in the main body of the scrutiny report, which is attached as an appendix.

### **Main options**

Cabinet may decide to do one of the following:

- 1) endorse the report and its findings
- 2) not endorse the report and its findings

Whichever decision is made will have to comply with the agreed protocol between scrutiny and the Cabinet, which lays down the method of endorsing or rejecting scrutiny recommendations.

### **Other options considered**

Not applicable.

**Recommendation:** - that the findings of the review be noted and the recommendations endorsed, with their implementation to be monitored by scrutiny in either six months or one year.

## **Considerations**

Resources, costs and risks: There are minimal considerations in this area and where applicable they have been included within responses by the Community and Environment directorate, to the recommendations later in the report.

Staffing/workforce: There are minimal considerations in this area and where applicable they have been included within responses by the Community and Environment directorate, to the recommendations later in the report.

Equalities impact: None in relation to the recommendations.

Legal comments: None in relation to the recommendations.

Community safety: None in relation to the recommendations.

## **Financial Implications**

Implementing the recommendations would have the following financial implications: None in relation to the recommendations.

## **Performance implications**

The partnership impacts directly upon 8 BVPIs, 3 of which are in the CPA Environment block. These are:

E11 (BV 224b): Condition of non-principal unclassified roads

E16 (BV 165): Percentage of crossings with disabled facilities

E18 (BV 187): Condition of footways

The other BVPIs are:

BV 223: Condition of principal roads

BV 215a: Average time for lighting repairs

BV 215b: Rectification of street lighting faults

BV 224a: Condition of non-principal roads

BV 100: Number of days traffic control in place

One of the targets this year is to consolidate the position of BV 224b, which is currently low in the middle threshold. A further seven local performance measures are directly influenced by the partnership.

The general condition of Harrow's roads and footways figures high in the MORI residents' survey, this against generally improving BVPI performance. Improved communications should improve residents' perception.

In London, against our immediate neighbours in particular, BVPIs are average but improving. Targets for the current year are forecast to be met and new targets set for next year based on that performance.

## Scrutiny Recommendations

Recommendation	Response from Community and Environment Services
<p>1. That the partnership ensure the performance management framework takes full account of qualitative items over and above the development of further quantitative KPIs. This would be accompanied by robust methodologies, central to a light touch governance regime that promotes innovation and risk-taking. The review group also found that early contractor involvement has been key to delivering some of the most innovative and best value solutions and should be encouraged within the organisational culture of the partnership, as well as serving as an example to other parts of the Council's workforce.</p>	<p>The recommendation supports the partnership concept, which is designed to encourage early contractor involvement and innovation.</p> <p>Through the existing governance arrangements and developing business planning process, there will be an ongoing review of the current performance regime, with an increased emphasis within existing resources, being placed on qualitative items.</p>
<p>2. That the portfolio holder may find opportunity for increased capacity with the same departmental head count due to the additional resource benefits of the AMP partnership and its innovative and specialist skills. The review group identified for example, that work has been taken off Council staff's shoulders in areas of design and in site assessment, where AMP now conduct this work. This has freed Council staff time for more strategic and statutory work, which has been under pressure.</p>	<p>One of the overriding principals driving the development of the partnership, was the recognised need to increase capacity.</p> <p>The diversion of routine work from Harrow to AccordMP has enabled a far greater focus by existing staff on asset management planning.</p> <p>This has resulted in the development of a comprehensive database of backlog maintenance. Future benefits from this re-alignment of workload, will allow Harrow to address the backlog with a structured and transparent methodology, reducing the risk of premature infrastructure failure and aiding customer satisfaction.</p>
<p>3. That the administration reflect on the fact that the AMP agreement was done under the expectation that the annual spend would be in the region of £12-£15 million. The AMP partnership</p>	<p>The success of AccordMP in winning contracts at Hillingdon and to a lesser extent professional services contracts at Ealing and Richmond, identifies significant business development</p>

<p>began part way through 2006 so 2007/08 is the first complete municipal year the partnership has run, and 2007/08 spend is in fact on target for £8 million, which could well present commercial issues for AMP. However, during our investigations AMP confirmed that the August 2006 agreement of Hillingdon Borough to retain AMP in a similar partnership has negated any adverse fall-out that may have arose from Harrow's reduced spend. AMP's economies of scale bring huge advantages to Harrow but these advantages can only be sustained with a minimum spend.</p>	<p>progress.</p> <p>This has been achieved in some part, by making use of Harrow as a beacon in Highway services for West London and can be developed further with the knowledge of a base long term contract in Harrow.</p> <p>Additionally, the future development of the Town Centre and Petts Hill etc, will raise turnover back to expectation levels for 2008/9 and potentially beyond.</p> <p>As noted in the recommendation however, it is acknowledged there is a risk of not achieving the full benefits of the partnership, if future spending levels fall significantly.</p>
<p>4. That an approach to communications and community involvement be taken that allows genuine partnership in decision-making with local people. This approach would also see continuous involvement with residents on all issues relating to public realm infrastructure through a joined-up approach to communications between AccordMP, Kier and the Council. The review group discovered that some communications that went out jointly from AMP and Harrow Council were not adhering to expected criteria of production and quality. For example, although 88 per cent of residents were satisfied with the work done on Uxbridge Road, 52 per cent were not satisfied with the communications, or lack thereof, during the work.</p>	<p>Public Relations and communications within highways projects is a specific area that improvements were anticipated through the partnership.</p> <p>Starting from a traditional low skill base, there is now a Communications strategy in place, due for further development in the New Year.</p> <p>The promotion of inclusive decision making, improved frequency of information dissemination during works, use of residents panels and higher standards of communication material will be addressed through the developing strategy. The additional resources resulting from the introduction of Harrow's new Communications team, is key to jointly raising service delivery to a significantly higher level in this area.</p>
<p>5. That each piece of project communication to residents be used as an opportunity for the portfolio holder to explain the broader objectives of the work being done and to communicate</p>	<p>The Council has a clear vision for the Borough into the future and the relevant priorities are accounted for in determining where public realm investment is directed.</p>

<p>the Council's vision of why and how we are delivering an improved public realm.</p>	<p>Close co-ordination with the Portfolio holder is planned, to ensure the public are made clearly aware of the investment being made, in order to improve Harrow's infrastructure environment.</p> <p>The joint future development of a highways charter, will inform residents of the level of service they should expect from the partnership.</p>
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### SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

<p>Name: Stephen Dorrian</p> <p>Date: 8 January 2008</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer</p>
<p>Name: Sheela Thakrar</p> <p>Date: 7 January 2008</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> on behalf of the Monitoring Officer</p>

### SECTION 4 – PERFORMANCE OFFICER CLEARANCE

<p>Name: Tom Whiting</p> <p>Date: 8 January 2008</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
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### SECTION 5 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Contact:** Eddie Collier, Head of Property and Infrastructure (Community and Environment Services),  
Ed Hammond, Scrutiny Officer, Strategy and Improvement  
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**Background Papers:**  
None relevant

**IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?**

1.	Consultation	N/A
2.	Corporate Priorities	N/A
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	N/A