
REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2008

Chairman:	* Councillor Stanley Sheinwald	
Councillors:	* B E Gate * Mitzi Green * Manji Kara * Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Jerry Miles * Mrs Vina Mithani	* Anthony Seymour * Mrs Rekha Shah (4) * Dinesh Solanki * Yogesh Teli * Mark Versallion
Voting	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
Co-opted:	† Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	* Mr R Chauhan * Mrs D Speel

- * Denotes Member present
(4) Denotes category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

[Note: Councillor Husain Akhtar also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 295 below].

295. **Scrutiny Review of Cultural Services - Beacon Centre Case Study:**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed Tracey Lees, Chief Executive for Home South, and Jeannie Cohen-Brand of Harrow College to the meeting.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group introduced the report titled 'Review of Cultural Services – Beacon Centre Case Study', which set out the findings and recommendations of the Group that had investigated the operation of the Beacon Centre in Rayners Lane. She explained the reasons behind the review and stressed that the remit of the Review Group was specific to the operation of sport and cultural services at the Beacon Centre. The wider relationships with the Rayners Lane Estate including housing and regeneration issues were not part of its remit.

The Chairman of the Review Group added that the study showed that there were tensions over access to the Beacon Centre, which had culminated with a number of recommendations, the main one being that a Summit ought to be convened to set out a new strategic vision for the Beacon Centre as the first step forward. She explained that scrutiny had tried to perform its role as 'an honest broker' in a difficult situation with a view to charting a way forward for the management and operation of the Beacon Centre. She thanked all those who had participated in the Review, including the Scrutiny Officer for his support. A Member of the Review Group commented on the need to provide value for money and a service to the community at the Beacon Centre.

Members' attention was drawn to an erratum to the report circulated at the meeting, which set out corrections to the report of the Review Group in relation to the work carried out by Harrow College at the Beacon Centre. In addition, a supporting statement was also circulated at the meeting on behalf of Harrow College.

The Chief Executive for Home South, having been invited to address the meeting, stated that Home South was of the view that the report of the Scrutiny Review Group was unbalanced and did not highlight the range of activities provided. The Chief Executive added that whilst Home South was aware that scrutiny was examining the provision of sport and cultural activities at the Beacon Centre, it felt that the matter was being looked at in isolation, as the Rayners Lane Estate, of which Beacon Centre was a part of, was changing for the better. She made the following points:-

- Rayners Lane Estate had the highest levels of need in the borough and that Home South, its landlord, had concentrated on the provision of the needs of the community, which were delivered in partnership with the Council, Harrow College and other stakeholders. Cultural and art activities together with holiday play schemes were catered for at the Beacon Centre. Home South acknowledged that there were gaps in provision and would welcome the Council's and other stakeholders participation in making improvements;
- Home South provided revenue funding for the Beacon Centre and that £330k provided by the Council was a one-off payment. The Centre was currently running a deficit and Home South's commitment was exemplified by the financial support it provided. The Beacon Centre also needed

to serve the wider community, which was charged a commercial rate for the use of the premises, in order to provide a valuable contribution to its financing and to help facilitate other events;

- Home South was committed to working with the Council on the community engagement aspect and acknowledged that the report of the Review Group provided an opportunity to clarify the Council's role in this regard;
- Whilst the majority of the recommendations were welcomed, recommendation 6 was complex and provided particular challenges. It was essential that expectations were not raised as a result. Home South appreciated that more work needed to be done on the community engagement aspect, and would appreciate support from the Council including resources to help increase capacity.

The Chief Executive for Home South stated that it was important that the roles of the stakeholders were clarified, relationships built-on and there was a need to move forward. She responded to Members' questions on experiences that could be drawn from similar schemes run by Home South in the UK, the work done through Forums to resolve tensions at the Beacon Centre and the financial aspects in which the Beacon Centre was expected to be self-financing, as part of its 5-year Business Plan.

The representative of Harrow College also addressed the meeting. She stated that whilst Harrow College was supportive of the recommendations, there were, in the opinion of the College, two factual inaccuracies, which ought to be corrected. These were in addition to those referred to in the erratum to the report of the Review Group circulated at the meeting. She stated that Harrow College had engaged fully with the residents, listened to their needs and had based staff at the Estate. A reflection of the activities provided had been undertaken prior to taking a decision on courses offered. The representative also stressed the need to ensure that expectations that could not be met were not raised.

In responding to questions from Members, the Chairman of the Review Group stressed the need for a dialogue and increased level of communication, with the Council acting as a community leader. She added that the Beacon Centre had heightened the demand for cultural and sporting facilities and the best way forward to resolve the issues identified were for all stakeholders to engage in a dialogue. It was a matter for Cabinet to allocate additional resources should they be thought necessary. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would check on progress in six months' time.

In light of the aforementioned comments from Home South and Harrow College, some Members suggested the need for a further report prior to taking a decision on the recommendations presented by the Review Group. They added that a fuller report evaluating the depth of concern and the remits of the various stakeholders to be an appropriate way forward. The Scrutiny Manager stressed the purpose of the review and advised that, as there was no dissent from Home South and Harrow College to the recommendations of the Review Group, the most appropriate way forward was to approve the recommendations. She was of the view that recommendations were unlikely to change as a result of the additional information requested by some Members. She suggested that the comments of Home South and Harrow College be appended to any recommendation to Cabinet. The Chairman of the Review Group also noted that Home South and Harrow College had largely supported the recommendations. She acknowledged that although there was further work to be done on the wider issues relating to the estate, the parameters of the review had been to look at the Beacon Centre only.

At this juncture, another Member of the Review Group addressed the meeting. He outlined the remit to which the Group had worked as set out in the original scope of the review. It was essential that the operation of the Beacon Centre was compatible with the needs of residents.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report of the Review Group and stated that it highlighted the breakdown of communications. He urged stakeholders to address this issue. It was essential in his view that the Council, Home South and Harrow College met to identify challenges before arranging a Summit to which the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services ought to be invited.

Following a short discussion on the need to append all comments and factual inaccuracies in its recommendations to Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the findings of the Review be noted;

(2) the recommendations be endorsed and their implementation monitored;

(3) the report of the Review Group, together with the amendment circulated at the meeting and the inclusion of inaccuracies identified by Harrow College, be recommended to 15 May 2008 Cabinet for approval and to Home South for consideration;

(4) additional comments and evidence submitted by Home Group and Harrow College be appended to the body of the report.