

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	8 th July 2008
Subject:	Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Divisional Director Strategy and Improvement
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Osborn, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report accompanies the scrutiny annual report for 2007/08

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- I. Endorse the scrutiny annual report 2007/08
- II. Refer the report to Full Council on 10th July for formal adoption

Reason: (For recommendation)

The Overview and Scrutiny committee is constitutionally required to produce an annual report of its activities for formal adoption by Full Council.

Section 2 – Report

Background (if needed)

This report outlines the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny committee, the Performance and Finance and Call-In sub committees and the Scrutiny Lead Councillors. It outlines outcomes of the individual projects that have been undertaken and includes results from the annual scrutiny survey.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Performance Issues

There are no specific performance issues associated with this report

Risk Implications

There are no risk implications associated with this report.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 24 th June 2008		
Name: Hugh Peart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Monitoring Officer
Date: 18 th June 2008		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Lynne McAdam, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 8420 9387

Background Papers:
None

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES



SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

2007/08

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Chairman's Overview

Welcome to the 2007/08 annual report of Overview and Scrutiny in Harrow. This has been an eventful year for scrutiny in Harrow. We started the year, like most of the council, facing a challenging financial situation, which saw a significant reduction in our budget. We have finished the year having undertaken a number of challenging projects and completely reconfigured our structure to make us leaner, more strategic and targeted at those issues of the most importance to the council and our residents.

In one of the most radical changes to scrutiny that the council has undertaken, the Overview and Scrutiny committee amalgamated all of the responsibilities previously held by the service-based sub committees into its own terms of reference to give the committee a generic and cross-cutting perspective. This senior committee is responsible for supporting the long-term strategic direction of the council and partners and for undertaking in-depth investigations of particular problems.

In addition to this committee, a Performance and Finance sub committee has been established to fill a long-standing gap in the scrutiny armoury. In the past, the committee structure as then configured offered only limited opportunity for scrutiny councillors to consider the service and financial performance of the council and our partners. In order to ensure that scrutiny is targeted at the issues of most importance and that performance of the authority and partners is given timely consideration, the sole remit of the Performance and Finance sub committee is the consideration of service performance and financial information. This has meant that key issues, such as Kier's delivery of the council's decent homes target, have been considered by scrutiny councillors as they have arisen. The Performance and Finance sub committee has the potential to become the 'powerhouse' of scrutiny, ensuring its focus on the issues of greatest importance is maintained.

In order to make sure that we still speak with authority on key issues for local people and to ensure that there is real connection between the performance function of the Performance and Finance sub committee and the longer term planning/strategic function of the Overview and Scrutiny committee we also nominated a number of our members to be lead scrutiny councillors: lead policy scrutiny councillors are members of the Overview and Scrutiny committee and lead performance scrutiny councillors are members of the Performance and Finance sub committee. The lead scrutiny councillors take special responsibility for one of the following areas which loosely reflect the blocs of the Local Area Agreement:

- Adult health and social care
- Children and young people
- Corporate effectiveness and finance
- Safer and stronger communities
- Sustainable development and enterprise

The lead scrutiny councillors meet *at least* quarterly in order to maintain oversight of performance and policy issues in their respective areas. They also provide a 'gateway' in to scrutiny by offering residents, other councillors, officers or partners an opportunity to raise any issue of concern. So far the scrutiny leads have dealt with a number of pressing local issues. Reports from each pair of scrutiny lead councillors below outline the main issues that they have considered during the year. We anticipate further expansion of their roles in the coming year with the introduction of the Councillor Calls for Action where we envisage a significant role for the lead scrutiny councillors.

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Cllr Janet Cowan, Lead Performance Councillor for Children and Young People earlier this year. She was a highly respected and competent councillor and scrutiny will miss her valuable contribution to our deliberations.

This is early days for the reconfigured structures and there are always improvements that can be made, a survey of councillors and officers after 6 months of the reconfigured structure would suggest that these improvements could include:

- Clarification of the role of the lead scrutiny councillors
- More information about the working of the structures
- Making sure that issues such as health scrutiny don't become marginalised in a cross-cutting environment
- (Conversely) that health scrutiny issues don't monopolise the time of the cross-cutting committee

More analysis of the results of this survey is included later in the report. The very first scrutiny awayday confirms these findings and during the coming year we will develop appropriate solutions.

In the light of the reconfiguration and in order to ensure that scrutiny councillors are at the top of their game, a number of training sessions have been held.

- The first session, for all councillors offered all an opportunity to consider and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of scrutiny.
- The second session, specifically for members of the Performance and Finance sub committee was designed to familiarise members of the sub committee with performance management processes.
- The third session saw the Corporate Director of Children's Services provide scrutiny councillors with information on the current issues facing the borough's young people and the council and our partners' response to these issues.
- The fourth session provided an opportunity for scrutiny councillors to discuss with Harrow's Director of Public Health the health priorities for the borough.
- A fifth session is planned for early summer and this will outline the council's response to the soon to be implemented 'Councillor Call for Action' process.

The annual report includes a report from both the Overview and Scrutiny committee and the Performance and Finance sub committee which will give detail of the specific activities that have been undertaken during the year. As a taster, we would suggest that the highlights have been, review of the council's partnership with Accord MP, review of Obesity, consideration of the performance of the council's cultural services and Performance and Finance sub committee's roundtable discussions with Kier regarding the delivery of the decent homes standard. In November we agreed our work programme for the next 12 – 18 months. We will be looking at a number of very exciting projects including the council's strategic relationship with the voluntary sector, redevelopment of the town centre and how we set and manage our budgets.

We have continued to raise the profile of scrutiny in Harrow in the local government community. Members of the scrutiny team, both councillors and officers were invited to speak at conferences considering implementation of the councillor calls for action proposals, effective budget scrutiny and performance management and our 'Water Management and

Drought Planning' review was cited at the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives' conference in 2007 as an example of excellent partnership scrutiny.

In order to clarify relationships between the scrutiny function and the executive and senior management, the Overview and Scrutiny committee has developed a specific protocol. This protocol lays down the responsibilities of all side in terms of developing an effective working relationship. The protocol has also established quarterly meetings between the chairman, vice chairman, Leader, Deputy Leader and the Chief Executive. We hope that these meetings will ensure that there are clear lines of communication between scrutiny, the executive and the senior management of the council, that everyone is kept up to date with the issues that are arising from scrutiny's investigations and that potential difficulties can be flagged up at the earliest opportunity.

Over the years we have made significant efforts to engage local people and experts in our investigations. This year we decided to formalise this process by establishing the scrutiny pool of advisors. We have invited all local voluntary and community groups to nominate one of their members to join this group along with all of residents who have offered their support to scrutiny in the past. We hope that this group will provide a powerful resource to the scrutiny function by providing easy access to expert advice for both the committees and the review groups. We look forward to working with our colleagues in the future. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many local people who have helped scrutiny during the past year, whether as co-optees to the committees, as participants in review groups or as respondents to our requests for information. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming years.

We are sure there are further improvements that we can make and we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our reconfigured structure. We look forward to placing Harrow Scrutiny at the cutting edge of national best practice. On behalf of all scrutiny councillors, we commend the 2007/08 to you.



Stanley Sheinwald
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Mitzi Green
Vice chairman,
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

Under the new arrangements for scrutiny, the Committee's role as strategic scrutiny body with focus on high level policy framework and responsibility has been strengthened. In addition the Committee has taken responsibility for commissioning all investigations.

The Committee meets approximately once a month, which has enabled us to be more responsive to emerging issues and has enabled us to schedule consideration of items in a more timely fashion.

Thematic meetings

Having taken the decision to reconfigure arrangements for scrutiny, we also felt it helpful to theme some of the meetings within the course of the year in order to ensure that key milestones in the year were properly covered.

Health

We have given a number of meetings a specific health focus this year, such as our first April meeting in order to fulfil responsibilities such as the consideration of each of the health trust's 'annual health checks'.

Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action has been a major regional development and we have commissioned our own working group to look at the proposals and to support the council representative on the pan-London Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Specific areas of interest have been the fit with local developments, for example the future of provision at the Brent Birth Centre and stroke and coronary services at Northwick Park Hospital.

We have also watched the development of the foundation trust application made by the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital and sought progress on the work of the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust's successful application.

We were also able to respond quickly to the news of three maternal deaths at Northwick Park Hospital and questioned the Director of Nursing at our next available meeting, which was within a fortnight of the announcement of the internal investigation.

Education

We were keen to ensure that we maintained a particular focus on education and children's services matters through the committee, particularly now that the education co-optees now sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committee and contribute to all of the work of the committee. We have been grateful for their input to the work of the committee over the past year.

This municipal year we received the children and young people strategic partnership scorecard in November, which included the provisional key stage and GCSE results. We invited the Portfolio Holders to attend this meeting for questioning.

We have also kept a watching brief on the pupil exclusion and the development of the Helix at the Teachers' Centre. Exclusions remain an area of concern for the committee and will be monitored over the coming months by the performance and finance sub committee.

We will also be monitoring strategic developments such as proposals for school organisation. We have commissioned a light-touch review of extended schools to consider the council's strategic approach to providing for students and the wider community.

Partnership

In February we based the meeting on the council's new corporate plan and preparations for the new Local Area Agreement. The Leader attended the meeting and answered questions on the corporate plan and flagship actions. The Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and the Harrow Police Borough Commander also attended. The Director of Public Health attended on behalf of Harrow Primary Care Trust.

In future we hope to combine consideration of the council budget with consideration of the corporate plan, now that these two key documents are being developed in tandem. We propose that the corporate plan and budget forms the basis of the discussion with the Leader and Chief Executive at the January Question and Answer session (Q&A) and that the mid year position as outlined in the Year Ahead Statement will form the basis of the Q&A discussions in June. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive all attended Q&A s held in January and June and provided us with interesting oversight on a number of important corporate issues.

Reviews

During the year the committee has commissioned a number of pieces of work. The Obesity review and the work of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny committee considering the implications of Lord Darzi's report 'Healthcare for London, A Framework for Action' are considered in the report from the Adult Health and Social Care leads. The light touch review of the performance of the council's partnership with Accord MP is considered in the report from the Sustainable Development and Enterprise leads.

However, in addition to these projects, the committee has commissioned the following investigations:

- In-depth review of Cultural Services, including a specific case study report on the Beacon Centre
- Standing review of NHS Finances, including a specific case study report on carers
- Standing review of the council's budget

Cultural Services review

2007 saw the completion of Overview and Scrutiny's Review of Cultural Services, which was intended to take a broad view of the way in which the Council provides these services to local people. Our focus was on the arts, but we also looked at libraries, sports and other leisure provision.

The review looked at the Council's strategic approach to cultural services, and then focussed its attention more directly on three case studies – the proposed construction of a library and arts centre on the Gayton Road site, the plans for the provision of artists' studios and Bernays Gardens, and the delivery of cultural services at the Beacon Centre in Rayners Lane. It was decided to postpone the last of these case studies – we carried out work on it separately in early 2008. More information can be found below.

Evidence was gathered through a combination of site visits – to Camden Arts Centre and Barnet Artsdepot, amongst others – meetings with key stakeholders and best practice evidence from a wide range of sources.

Our recommendations related to three key areas – a strategic overview of the council’s current practice in these areas as compared to best practice, the level of cultural facilities actually provided in the borough, and community involvement. The group concluded that the council needs to identify a clear set of aims for the development of Harrow’s cultural services, suggesting that any review of the cultural services strategy should address the many competing priorities and visions for the purpose of cultural services and seek to work closely with contracted partners and voluntary groups to reconcile these differing views. The group further concluded that facilities and the use of those facilities needed to be targeted more to those who needed them, based on demographic information, and that the Council needed to view itself more as an enabler of cultural activity, rather than a provider of cultural services to an essentially passive population.

We are grateful for the support of Tim Oelman, the community co-optee who assisted us on this review.

It was disappointing that Cabinet did not accept our recommendations, although we note that many of them related to the next planned refresh of the cultural strategy in 2009, and so we will continue to look with interest at this issue in the coming months to see whether our recommendations will be taken into account.

Beacon Centre case study

At the time of the cultural services review, the Beacon had been open for only a few weeks, and so consideration of its operation was thought to be premature. The decision was made that it should be returned to in 2008, and so in January a number of meetings were held with what the review group considered the key stakeholders in the Centre – the Council, Home Group and the Rayners Lane Estate Tenants and Residents Association – to examine their interrelationship and the services being provided to local people at the Beacon.

It soon became clear that there had been some difficulties during the early months of the Beacon’s opening. The group’s recommendations mainly related to improved communication between the key parties. Most significantly, it was recommended that a summit be held on the estate to give local people a say in what they thought the Beacon should be providing. Following on from this, we recommended that a new strategic framework be built to help deliver local people’s aspirations.

We were pleased that Cabinet endorsed all of our recommendations, and we look forward to agreeing with the officers involved exactly how they should be implemented, before returning to monitor this issue later on this year.

Standing Review of NHS Finances

This review was set up in July 2006 in response to the continuing financial difficulties being experienced by colleagues in the local health service. These difficulties have had a significant impact upon the council's own financial position and this review was given a specific remit to hold our health service partners to account and to investigate potential solutions to mitigate the impact of these financial problems on local people. The group continued to meet during the last municipal year and heard from the Chief Executives and Finance Directors of both Harrow PCT and the Northwest London Hospitals NHS Trust. We are grateful for contributions to the work of the review from Penny Furness-Smith, Paul Najsarek, Dick Van Brumen and Jasvinder Perihar from the council, Fiona Wise from the NW London Hospitals Trust and David Slegg, Richard Jeffrey, Clare Walker, Mary Cleary, Jonathan Tyms and Dr Gillian Schiller from Harrow PCT. We are also grateful for the continuing contribution that Avani Modasia, Janet Smith, Ruth Coman and Julian Maw have made to the review, their specialist local knowledge has been a real bonus for the group.

During the year, the group monitored the financial performance of the health partners and also investigated the implementation of revised continuing care criteria. A highlight of the work of the review this year was the investigation of the impact of the financial difficulties on the borough's carers. A case study of local carers was able to make a number of observations and recommendations to all three organisations which we hope will draw their attention to what has happened to ordinary people as a result of their budgetary difficulties. The findings of the case study will form a central part of the standing review's final report, which we hope to submit to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in the summer/autumn of this year.

Standing Review of the Budget

The council is facing a difficult financial future and has had to make some tough budget decisions. Scrutiny has a key role to play in challenging the budget setting process, though we have struggled to make a really effective contribution in recent times.

Last year's annual report included information on the Budget Challenge Panel, a departure from the traditional presentation of the budget to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee which offered a more focused challenge to the budget. However, feedback from the process pointed to the need for a greater refinement.

As a result, members of the committee agreed that consideration of the budget should be given specific focus and therefore set up the standing review of the budget to take a long-term view as to the effectiveness of the borough's budget setting process. We are delighted that Phillip Moorish, Elizabeth Hugo and Cliff Litchfield, members of the Open Budget Panel, have agreed to participate in the review.

The first task of the group has been to look at the council's in-year budget process. Review group members have visited a number of other authorities to see what Harrow can learn from their practice and has interviewed a number of officers to learn more about the process. The initial report from the review is anticipated in the summer.

Longer-term, the review will consider specific areas of the council's activity to see how budget planning is undertaken and make recommendations for improvement. All of this activity, combined with the in-year monitoring of the council's finances by the Performance and Finance sub committee should mean that, in future, consideration of the annual budget at the Overview and Scrutiny committee is a much better informed and useful process. The review will meet over the next 2 years to cover the lifetime of the Medium Term Financial Strategy



Stanley Sheinwald
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Mitzi Green
Vice chairman,
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Committee meetings	9 ordinary 4 special
Attendance by Leader	2
Attendance by Portfolio holders	Councillor David Ashton (3) Councillor Christine Bednell (1) Councillor Susan Hall (1) Councillor Janet Mote (1) Councillor Paul Osborn (2) Councillor Anjana Patel (1) Councillor Eric Silver (1)
Attendance by Chief Executive	2 - The Deputy Chief Executive represented the Chief Executive on one occasion.

Performance and Finance Sub Committee

2007/08 has been a busy first year for the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

It has also been a year for innovation, and for new thinking around how the scrutiny function looks at performance information. This is not only new for Harrow, but nationally, as well – Harrow is one of the first local authorities in the country to have adopted a robust and systematic approach for the analysis of performance information. The purpose of Performance and Finance as an “engine” for the scrutiny process, identifying key issues and escalating matters of importance to long-term policy, has been central in our deliberations this year.

The process is underpinned by a conscious decision that we will only look at performance issues where we need to, on a “by exception” basis. Our first task in summer 2007 was to develop a set of challenging criteria to establish exactly what would go on the agenda for our quarterly committee meetings, and to ensure that our work was focussed and targeted. Only when this had been completed, and there was agreement about the focus and objectives for our work, were we able to start looking at substantive issues. This began in November, with a consideration of issues relating to resident satisfaction, recycling and waste and housing.

We returned to housing for in-depth examination in the New Year, speaking in depth to officers from Kier, Adults and Housing and Community and Environment Services. Identifying what we considered was a breakdown in communication between these key services, we investigated how performance might be improved – in particular, how the Decent Homes programme targets for 2007/08 might be delivered. The targets with which we were provided at the meeting seemed very challenging, so we were delighted when, having requested monthly updates to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman’s regular meeting, end-of-year performance indicated a remarkable turnaround as a consequence of additional resources and improved working practices put in place by Kier.

With recommendations from Performance and Finance Committee now being fed directly into the Council’s Improvement Boards, we are confident that in the coming year the Committee will come to play a yet more important role in the improvement of the Council both in terms of our central government targets, as well as an improvement in absolute terms, as judged by our residents.

Reviews

Under the new scrutiny structure, Performance and Finance’s scope for carrying out review is more limited than O&S, given its focus on in-year performance. However, the sub-committee has carried out one review this year, into the performance of the council’s partnership with Accord MP.

Accord MP

In autumn 2007, Performance and Finance recommended that a review be commissioned into the operation of the Accord MP partnership. This partnership, an innovative relationship between the council and Accord MP to provide public realm infrastructure services (involving highways maintenance, amongst other issues), had raised some concerns in previous months and seemed to have had a shaky start since terms had been agreed the previous year.

The review was a useful and timely piece of work, particularly considering that public realm services are highly visible and highly emotive to the public. The aim of the review group was threefold – to look at how public realm work was carried out before the partnership, to look at how it is done now and what has changed and to identify any lessons that could be learned.

The group looked at a large amount of evidence, from high-level strategy documents to a series of surveys of residents, to site visits, to support its work. It was clear from the outset that lessons had been learned from the partnership’s initial problems, and that the service enjoyed by local people as a result had been significantly improved. Moreover, it seemed that the unique flexibility of the partnership arrangement had allowed the council and Accord MP to pursue some particularly innovative work. One particular example was the reconstruction of Uxbridge Road in Stanmore, one of three case studies we investigated in detail (the other two being the construction of elective vehicle crossings (dropped kerbs) and emergency response work).

Our recommendations related mainly to performance management, financial control and communications. Our intention, in making our recommendations, was to build on the work that was already being done throughout the partnership; we were of the view, in fact, that the experience of the partnership could be used as an exemplar for the rest of the organisation.

In brief, we recommended changes to the performance management framework, to take into account more qualitative issues in addition to those results and outcomes that can be measured easily; that regard to had to the additional resources that had been freed up by the partnership amongst Council officers; that the advantages provided by the partnership, through its economies of scale, should be maintained through reference to a minimum spend, and that local people should be kept informed, and that active steps should be taken to involve them, in improvement work to the public realm being carried out in their area.

We were pleased that all our recommendations were endorsed by Cabinet, and that officers have been keen to take steps to implement them. We look forward to returning to this issue in due course and looking at the progress that has been made.



Cllr Mark Versallion
Chairman
Performance and Finance sub committee
committee



Cllr Brian Gate
Vice Chairman
Performance and Finance sub
committee

Committee meetings	4
Attendance by Portfolio holders	Councillor Camilla Bath

Reports from the Lead Members

Adult Health and Social Care

Scrutiny review of obesity

Between May and November 2007, a scrutiny review group (chaired by Councillor Rekha Shah) conducted its enquiries into how best to tackle obesity in the borough. Obesity is a growing concern affecting the nation's health and is also an identified local public health area for action in Harrow. This topic was initially brought forward to scrutiny's attention by Harrow Primary Care Trust.

Given the breadth of the topic, the review group recognised the need to target enquiries and focussed its work through two workstreams:

1. Children's opportunities for access to physical activity
2. Adulthood obesity and diabetes

These enquiries were in the main conducted through visits within the borough and to a neighbouring authority and two challenge panels where members questioned a wide range of witnesses from local and national organisations.

The findings from these workstreams led to scrutiny's recommendations. These recommendations highlight the importance of multi-agency working, targeting provision, using existing resources to progress local work, developing strategic frameworks, jointly delivering public messages, and the role of GPs in supporting people. The recommendations highlight the cross-cutting nature of the review and are therefore assigned to a variety of different services.

The recommendations form a solid base for action in the local drive to tackle obesity and offer challenges to the Council, and colleagues in health services and other partners to take them forward. The report has been very well received and feedback from the colleagues within the council, Primary Care Trust and the Harrow Strategic Partnership indicates that there is a real willingness to drive forward the issues and recommendations raised by scrutiny. Scrutiny will of course monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Visits

During the last year, members have visited two local hospitals to help gather evidence to supplement scrutiny's enquiries:

- Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital was visited in August 2007 and discussions held with the Chief Executive of the Trust to talk through their application for foundation trust status and more widely the future of the Stanmore site. Members also toured the hospital wards and spoke to patients and staff.
- Members visited Northwick Park Hospital in February 2008 to follow up their previous enquiries into maternity issues at the hospital. Councillors spoke to a number of staff and also visited the new Paediatrics Accident and Emergency provision. This was valuable in feeding into our deliberations about the Hospital Trust's consultation on Brent Birthing Centre and also to provide local evidence on maternity services to the pan-London committee considering the *Healthcare for London* proposals.

We have used these visits to inform our discussions at committee on specific issues and also to help formulate our scrutiny commentaries to the self-assessments by each of the four NHS trusts serving the borough (North West London Hospitals Trust, Harrow Primary Care Trust, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Central and North West London Foundation Trust).

'Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action' – the Darzi Review

In Autumn last year NHS London announced that it would be holding a public consultation on *Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action* (the review by Lord Darzi on London's healthcare). As with all NHS consultations which require consideration from across a number of local authorities, boroughs needed to form a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) to consider the proposals contained in the framework and the consultation process. The JOSC held representation from each London borough and two neighbouring counties and was an effective scrutiny forum for gathering evidence on healthcare needs and services for Londoners. Evidence was gathered from a range of witnesses, including:

- From the Royal Colleges of: GPs, Midwives, Paediatrics and Child Health, Surgeons, Physicians, Nursing
- NHS London
- Members of the clinical working groups in the Darzi Review teams
- London Connects
- The Guardian "Public" Magazine
- King's Fund
- Association of Director of Social Services
- London Councils
- Transport for London
- London Ambulance Service
- Macmillan Cancer Support

The JOSC's final report included consideration of evidence received at JOSC sessions, as well as written submissions from individual boroughs and other organisations. The Harrow scrutiny response was compiled by our own Darzi Working Group (consisting of five councillors) following discussions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the corporate director for Adults and Housing, the portfolio holder for Adults and also the Chief Executive of Harrow Primary Care Trust.

Looking forward

Given the policy horizon in health and social care for the forthcoming year, we anticipate another busy year. One area of local priority that we have already identified is the implementation of the council's transformation programme in adults' social care. A particular focus for scrutiny may be the issues around safeguarding adults. In addition to this we expect that much work will flow from the outcomes of the Stage One deliberations around *Healthcare for London* and we will need to consider the more specific proposals affecting Harrow (Stage Two).



Policy Lead
Councillor Vina Mithani



Performance Lead
Councillor Rekha Shah

Children and Young People

There have been a range of national policy developments in the arena of children and young people, not least the publication of the ten-year *Children's Plan*. We have taken advantage of the new role of the lead members in meeting regularly with the Corporate Director and following up a number of areas of interest outside of the committee environment. We have also taken advantage of the committee setting in providing a 'critical friend' challenge to performance in this area by inviting the relevant Portfolio Holders to attend for a Q&A.

ContactPoint

One of our particular areas of focus this year has been ContactPoint. Following discussions with the Corporate Director we received a detailed briefing on Harrow's work in this area from the Safeguarding Children Manager and her colleagues. We were pleased to hear that Harrow's ethos is that ContactPoint should not just be about IT infrastructure and that the focus has been on developing the workforce and the importance of collaborative working between agencies.

Care Matters

We have been monitoring the progress of the White Paper *Care Matters: Time for Change*, (published in June 2007). It highlights the disparity in outcomes for children and young people in care compared with the outcomes for all children. The document has a strong partnership theme in that emphasis is placed on all aspects of wellbeing and the need for partners to come together to meet those needs. We plan to undertake a challenge panel in the future to examine Harrow's preparedness for responding to this important agenda.

Visit to Northwick Park Hospital – February 2008

Councillor Margaret Davine visited Northwick Park Hospital in February with Councillor Vina Mithani (Policy lead for health and social care). The visit was designed to help to inform the Overview and Scrutiny committee's preparations for the 'annual health checks' and also consideration of the impact of the *Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action* proposals for the borough. It focused on maternity services and paediatric provision within Accident and Emergency. With regard to maternity services, time spent in special measures was viewed positively, in that the service had received additional external support, as well as investment in the estate by the trust and there was a feeling that that had also led to cultural change. Given the recent announcement by the Hospitals Trust that a further internal investigation is being undertaken, into additional maternal deaths, we intend to invite the chief executive to a future meeting to ensure that lessons are being learned.

Future of schools

A major development for Harrow will be the *Building Schools for the Future* (BSF) programme. We had originally hoped to undertake a wide ranging review to contribute to the development of a model for Harrow but as Harrow has been brought forward in the BSF programme we consider that our energies are best directed elsewhere. We plan to undertake a more focused piece of work in autumn 2008 on Harrow's extended schools.

Brent Birth Centre

The children and young people lead members responded to the North West London Hospitals NHS Trust's consultation on the future of the Brent Birth Centre.

The trust's favoured option was to transfer inpatient (delivery) maternity care to Northwick Park Hospital's Maternity Unit and to create a dedicated midwifery-led unit within Northwick Park Hospital's recently refurbished maternity unit. The option included providing antenatal services at Central Middlesex Hospital.

In response to the consultation we indicated our support for this option because of the improved services for Harrow mothers. We were, however, concerned about the later strategic fit with regional developments, particularly *Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action*. We hope to explore the impact of regional policy on local provision through Harrow's contribution to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and plan to further explore the sub-regional proposals with the trust in the future as they emerge.



Policy Lead
Cllr Margaret Davine



Performance Lead
Cllr Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Corporate Effectiveness

We have met three times during the municipal year and have received briefings from officers on a number of critical corporate issues . Two of the most pressing issues were:

Staff Morale – as measured by the staff survey which is undertaken on a bi-annual basis. The survey's purpose is to engage with staff and seeks feedback on our people management/development processes the results are due to be reported to the July 08 Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We have kept a close eye on staff morale during the last year especially in the light of the need to change the culture of the organisation. We were able to use the information we have gathered during the briefings to frame a number of questions to the Portfolio for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services when he attended the April meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

We have also been concerned to hear that staff sickness levels have increased significantly and that the council is not managing this well. We therefore recommended that this issue was escalated for further investigation by the Performance and Finance sub committee. We will also keep the matter under review during our future briefings.

Residents' Satisfaction – officers have kept us briefed on this highly critical area of council performance. We were shocked to hear that currently

- Overall satisfaction is the lowest of all London boroughs
- Satisfaction with complaint handling is 24%, the lowest level of satisfaction is 23%
- Satisfaction with cleanliness is 56%, the lowest level of satisfaction is 49%, the mean is 65% and the highest is 90%
- Satisfaction with museums and galleries is 23%, the lowest is 12%, the mean is 33% and the highest is 84%

This is an issue which we have suggested is kept under review by the Performance and Finance sub committee and the scrutiny leadership group. We are aware that the council itself is developing its own consultation strategy which will support the more detailed investigation of residents' concerns. We have recommended that a challenge panel is held to support the development of this strategy.

We have also been briefed on a number of other issues:

Strategy for People – the council's workforce development plan which sets out key workforce needs - resourcing and skills and projects to address specific hotspots. We received a presentation from the Head of Human Resources to consider how HR policies are being implemented.

Individual Performance Appraisal and Development (IPAD) - under which officers identify key performance objectives in the light of the council and directorate priorities. Performance against these objectives is assessed annually and reviewed at 6 months. We were also briefed about the council's proposals to introduce a core competency framework for all staff,

Employment Law – The Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development also briefed us on a number of key changes to employment law including:

- Introduction of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights –Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007
- Paternity leave and pay extended Extension of maternity pay to 12 months

Organisational Review – following the appointment of Michael Lockwood as Chief Executive in June, a number of changes were made to the senior management structure and the Divisional Director of Human Resources has been able to keep us informed of these changes.

Future changes to CPA and LAA – we were advised of the significant changes proposed to both the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Local Area Agreement processes which will mean that assessment of local performance will shift from being primarily based on the council's performance to something which is more focussed on how a number of local partners are co-operating to deliver, in particular the priorities identified in the Local Area Agreement

There is certainly much going on in the council's corporate corridors and we look forward to ensuring that proposals benefit from the support of scrutiny over the coming months.



Policy Lead
Cllr Stanley Sheinwald



Performance Lead
Cllr Mark Versallion

Safer and Stronger Communities

This year, most attention has been concentrated on issues that will be coming to fruition during 2008/09 – specifically, the Councillor Call for Action and the associated changes to the council (and scrutiny's) relationship with the police. Also of importance have been the changes underway to the council's relationships with its other public, private and voluntary sector partners. These changes, which are to give effect to the new CAA inspection regime, will have profound effects upon the way in which the council engages with the local community.

Post Office closures

Along with the Sustainable Development and Enterprise leads, we looked in depth at the post office closures programme (officially called the Network Change Programme), and provided the Council's official response to Post Office Ltd's (POL) consultation in the spring.

Scrutiny carried out a review of the 2002 closure proposals when they were put forward, which the outcomes of which do not seem to have been taken into account by POL when they came to make their final decision. Consequently, our first step was to establish the particular criteria being used by POL as part of this new consultation exercise. We were not confident that these criteria – insofar as we could make them out, and how they were weighted – were sufficient to take into account the nuanced and particular local needs of the Harrow community. We were also particularly concerned that the number of closures was static – that is to say, that if an appeal against a particular closure was successful, another post office would have to be found to “take its place” in the closure programme. This seemed to us to be inequitable, and to make commenting of the closures difficult. Our response to POL reflected these concerns.

Other work

A review is under way of the council's relationship with the voluntary sector. The findings and recommendations will help to inform the areas in which we expect to concentrate during 2008/09.



Policy Lead
Cllr Anthony Seymour



Performance Lead
Cllr Nana Asante

Sustainable Development and Enterprise

2007/08 has been a busy time for our area, with some key legislative changes as well as some high-profile Council projects to consider. We have also highlighted a few issues which were later taken up by scrutiny's formal committees.

Accord MP

One of our key projects was to undertake, at the request of the Performance and Finance sub committee a review of the operation of the Accord MP partnership. Accord MP were appointed by the Council to provide highways maintenance and design services. The potential benefits to such an arrangement were significant – a more responsive service on account of economies of scale, increased expertise and the opportunity to allow Council staff's time and resources to be released to carry out more strategic and tactical work, to ensure that the service delivered further value for money.

The review found that despite some initial problems, the relationship between the Council and Accord MP was growing strongly. Key recommendations were made regarding improvements to communications with local residents in areas where work was being carried out, and in terms of budgeting and resources.

The review group was pleased that the review was received positively by the service, and by the Portfolio Holder; the service is now putting in place steps to deliver the recommendations, and progress will be assessed in the early autumn. The review report is being used to inform the upcoming efficiency review of this service, which is being undertaken by the Council's Improvement Programme Team.

Planning

We briefly looked at the proposals for Byron leisure centre, the purpose being to make a judgment on whether the issue should be escalated to O&S, although plans to carry out a challenge panel on this issue had to be reconsidered because of the tight timescales involved in the consultation and planning process. We looked briefly at the Planning Bill, and discussed how it might impact upon Harrow, particularly in relation to the planned Community Infrastructure Levy, which will affect the way in which the council negotiates s106 agreements.

Housing

Last year, housing performance was causing some concern, and it was an issue we looked at informally both in September and December last year. The issue was taken up by Performance and Finance at their meeting in January. Performance has now improved significantly, and the council's relationship with Kier has clearly benefited as a result.

More generally, we carried out some background work last year

Transport

There have been no significant issues relating to transport this year. Local developments which we have looked at include the reconstruction of Petts Hill bridge (which was delayed because of the bankruptcy of Metronet). We also looked with interest at the findings of the light-touch review into the council's partnership with its highways partner Accord MP, and will be assisting in the monitoring of the review's recommendations.

Other issues

We looked briefly at the council's decision to sign the Nottingham Declaration, and the council's response to climate change. This is something that the ongoing review of town centre redevelopment will be looking at in more detail; this review – on which we both sit - will, in fact, be concentrating on a number of issues specific to our area.



Policy Lead
Cllr Jerry Miles



Performance Lead
Cllr Dinesh Solanki

Scrutiny Member Development Programme 2007/2008

This year, especially given the reconfiguration of scrutiny structures, it has been important to consolidate the changes, members' roles and responsibilities within it as well as their knowledge of specific subject areas. The scrutiny member development programme has addressed these needs through various means, as detailed below.

Generic Scrutiny Training Session

These sessions were held for all councillors on:

- 18 October 2007 – attended by 23 councillors and co-optees
- 30 January 2008 (repeat session) – attended by 8 councillors

The sessions aimed to reinforce the fundamental principles of scrutiny in Harrow, inform members about the changes in scrutiny and the rationale behind this and also engage members in exploring ways to take the new look scrutiny forward including issues around work programming. The sessions were well received and sparked open discussions following the scrutiny reconfiguration, facilitated by groupwork exercises. About half of council members attended one of these sessions.

Scrutiny subject-specific briefings

These briefings were aimed primarily at all scrutiny councillors and co-optees:

- Performance and Finance Training Session on 23 October 2007 – delivered by teams within Strategy and Improvement Division, attended by 12 scrutiny councillors who are members/reserves of the new Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- Briefing on children's issues on 15 November 2007 – including a presentation from the Corporate Director of Children's Services and attended by 19 councillors/co-optees.
- Briefing on health issues on 4 February 2008 – delivered by colleagues in Harrow Primary Care Trust to 13 councillors, co-optees and a non-executive director of the PCT Board.

These briefings and training sessions were more specialised than the generic scrutiny session. The performance and finance session looked to develop some of the key knowledge and skills needed for the new scrutiny sub-committee. The service briefing sessions provided an outline of key issues relating to the subject area (local and national policy developments) and sought to develop members' understanding of how the new scrutiny structure could facilitate scrutiny of these policy areas. A further session on Councillor Call for Action and community safety was originally included as part of the scrutiny member development programme however may now be opened out to all members, pending legislation.

Evaluation of the sessions highlighted how valuable members found these sessions with a call for future briefings on subject areas as relevant/timely.

Improvement & Development Agency's National Councillor Mentoring Programme

Funded by Capital Ambition, places were available for scrutiny councillors on the IDeA national councillor mentoring programme. This work focuses on role mentoring work with a small group of councillors and uses an accredited peer councillor mentor with an action-learning approach. In Harrow, the programme was aimed at scrutiny leads and the vice-chairs of Overview & Scrutiny and Performance & Finance committees.

London Scrutiny Network learning events

Over the past year the London Scrutiny Network has run a series of learning events, funded by Capital Ambition. These have been open to all scrutiny councillors:

- 14 December 2007 – Councillor Call for Action (hosted by LB Merton)
- 28 February 2008 – Raising the profile of scrutiny through budget scrutiny (hosted by LB Hounslow), including a presentation delivered by Harrow’s Scrutiny’s Lead for Children and Young People (Performance).
- 8 April – ‘Councillors as Community Leaders’ (LB Hillingdon)

There are further events later this year on joint scrutiny, scrutiny of performance management and scrutinising partnerships.

Call- In Sub Committee

At committee

The call-in process enables decisions that have been taken but not yet implemented by the cabinet, portfolio holders or officers to be examined by members of the call-in sub committee. A decision can be called in by:

- Any six members of the council, and additionally, in relation to Executive decisions on education matters only, any six Members of the Council and the voting co-opted members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 150 members of the public, (defined as anyone registered on the electoral roll of the borough).

Whoever is calling in the decision must notify the Chief Executive and specify the grounds upon which the call in is being made. These are:

1. Inadequate consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders prior to the decision
2. The absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision
3. The decision is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the budget framework
4. The action is not proportionate to the desired outcome
5. A potential human rights challenge
6. Insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice.

The call-in sub committee can reach one of the following conclusions:

- The challenge to the decision should be taken no further and the decision should be implemented
- The decision is contrary to the policy framework or contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget framework and should therefore be referred to the council
- The matter should be referred back to the decision taker for reconsideration.

Two non-education decisions were called-in this year:

- Outcome of spring 2007 statutory consultations on community care services – Fair Access to Care Service
- Development of leisure and cultural services

Both were called-in by councillors and the grounds for call-in were rejected by the sub committee on both occasions.

Education matters

Education co-optees on the Overview and Scrutiny committee are also entitled to sit on the call-in sub committee when it considers education matters. A call-in sub-committee for education was established in November 2006 with the purpose of maintaining the entitlement of the majority political group to hold a majority on the committee.

The first meeting of the call-in sub committee (education) was held in January 2008. 181 residents called in cabinet's decision on amalgamation of first and middle schools. The sub committee rejected the call-in.

Statistics – call-in	2007/08	2006/07
Committee meetings:	3	3
Decisions called-in:	3	16
Call-ins triggered by residents	1	0
Call-ins rejected:	3	9
Call-ins upheld:	0	7
Decisions altered following call-in:	N/A	2

Date of decision	Date of call-in	Issue	Reason for call-in	Outcome of call-in
Cabinet 25 July 2007	13 August 2007	Outcome of spring 2007 statutory consultations on community care services – Fair Access to Care Services (key decision)	1-6	Rejected
Cabinet 8 November 2007	29 November r 2007	Development of leisure and cultural services a) decision relating to Byron Park b) decision relating to Library/Arts Centre at Gayton Road (key decision)	1&2	Rejected
Cabinet 17 January 2008	30 January 2008	Amalgamation of First and Middle Schools	1&6	Rejected



**Cllr Anthony Seymour
Chairman**



**Cllr Mitzi Green
Vice Chairman**

SCRUTINY SCORECARD

Quarter 4 2007/08

Ref	Q/Annual	Ref name	Target	Variance	Q1 Actual	Q2 Actual	Q3 Actual	Q4 Actual	Annual
C1	Q	% of issues considering data from the Forward Plan	60%	10% Variance	N/A	0% RED	8% - RED	0% - RED	2.6% - RED
C2	Q	% of issues considering data from scrutiny leads	60%	10% Variance	N/A	100% - GREEN	73% - GREEN	42.5% - RED	71.8% - GREEN
C3	Q	% of issues deriving directly from the corporate S / PI function	50%	10% Variance	N/A	0% RED	41% - AMBER	71.4% - GREEN	37.5% - RED
C4	A	% of WP items subjected to VFM test under Scrutiny Principles	100%	3% Variance					100% - GREEN
C5	Q	% of comments to hits received at scrutiny website (as %)	13%	10% Variance	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
C6	A	% of findings reflecting comments made by local people	30%	10% Variance					27% - AMBER

C7	A	% of res panel with a "g" or "fg" knowledge of scrutiny	30%	10% Variance						N/A
PE1	A	% of officers considering scrutiny's input into policy "useful"/"v useful".	100%	5% Variance						65% - RED
PE2	Q	Circulation of review info prior to publication	100%	5% Variance	N/A	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN		100% - GREEN
PE3	A	% of officers considering opportunity to input into WP "useful"/"v useful"	100%	5% Variance						55% - RED
PE4	A	% of offs sat with scrutiny process overall	100%	10% Variance						90% - AMBER
PE5	Q	% of recommendations approved by cabinet	100%	3% Variance	N/A	0% - RED	N/A	100% - GREEN		50% - RED
R1	A	Delivery of scrutiny WP within budget (% budget spent)	100%	10% Variance						97% - GREEN
R2	A	Delivery of IDRs within resources (% of budget spent)	100%	10% Variance						N/A
R3	A	Completion of PM framework as required	100%	3% Variance						89.7% - RED
R4	A	% of reviews successfully monitored on a 0.5yr/1yr basis	100%	5% Variance						100% - GREEN

R5	A	Prop of reviews demonstrating significant positive impact on service reviewed	100%	10% Variance						N/A
PS1	Q	% of findings reflecting evidence received from partners	60%	10% Variance	N/A	24% - RED	100% - GREEN	67% - GREEN	63.7% - GREEN	
PS2	Q	% of meetings attended by co-optees where required	80%	10% Variance	N/A	50% - RED	54.5% - RED	89.3% - GREEN	64.6% - RED	
PS3	A	% of partners "satisfied" with scrutiny process	100%	10% Variance					100% - GREEN	
PS4	Q	Ratio ext:/int witnesses on relevant reviews (as %)	33%	10% Variance	N/A	62.5% - GREEN	57% - GREEN	64% - GREEN	61.2% - GREEN	
PS5	Q	% of recommendations based on analysis of "best practice" evidence	100%	10% Variance	N/A	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	
PS6	Q	% of recommendations relating to partnership working, where appropriate	60%	10% Variance	N/A	80% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	93.3% - GREEN	
S1	Q	Reviews reporting at agreed times	100%	3% Variance	N/A	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	
S2	Q	Rev gp agendas made available 5 days in adv of meeting	100%	10% Variance	N/A	92% - AMBER	87% - RED	83.3% - RED	87.4% - RED	

S3	Q	Timely production of Harrow Scrutiny newsletter	100%	5% Variance	N/A	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN
S4	Q	Info available on scrutiny website	100%	10% Variance	N/A	0% - RED	100% - GREEN	100% - GREEN	66.6% - RED
S5	Q	Review meetings attended by Members where required	100%	10% Variance	N/A	46% - RED	65% - RED	75.2% - RED	62.2% - RED
S6	A	% of councillors "happy" with op of the scrutiny process	90%	10% Variance					80% - AMBER

RESULTS - Q4

Lower threshold: TEN
Middle threshold: THREE
Upper threshold TWELVE
No
data: FOUR

Outcomes from the Scrutiny Survey

As part of scrutiny's commitment to continuous improvement, each year we survey cabinet members, senior managers, other back bench councillors and partners. The main focus of this year's survey has been the effectiveness of the reconfiguration of scrutiny. 15 completed questionnaires were returned.

Specific results reveal the following opinions

Amongst scrutiny councillors:

- Councillors are not convinced of the quality of discussions at committee
- An overwhelming majority of councillors are happy with the support they receive to prepare for the committee and with the information they receive from officers
- Councillors are not convinced about the quality of the composition of agendas for the Overview and Scrutiny committee, the length of the agenda and the length of the meeting
- Councillors are fairly satisfied with the outcome of meetings
- Only a minority of councillors think that scrutiny has helped to improve services
- Opinion is split as to whether or not the revised structures have improved the scrutiny function
- There is a slightly higher level of satisfaction with the composition of Performance and Finance sub committee agendas, with the length of these agendas and with the length of these meetings
- Opinion is split as to whether consideration of an issue by the Performance and Finance sub committee has helped improve services
- A significant majority of councillors feel that there are further improvements that can be made to the scrutiny function.
- Opinion is split regarding the effectiveness of the Lead Councillor structure
- There is a generally positive view of the new review processes (challenge panels, light touch review, standing reviews)

Amongst executive councillors and senior managers:

- A majority are clear as to why they are being asked to attend committee meetings and a majority are happy with the quality of the questioning
- Opinion is divided on whether or not scrutiny councillors have a clear understanding of the issue being considered
- There is general satisfaction with the composition of Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting agendas and with the quality of the outcome of the meeting
- A majority of respondents felt that consideration of the issues by the Overview and Scrutiny committee had helped them to improve services and 75% felt that the reconfigured structure had improved the performance of scrutiny
- Although the number of responses was small, in general respondents are satisfied with the Lead Scrutiny members structure and with the revised scrutiny review processes (challenge panels, light touch review, standing reviews)
- An overwhelming majority feel that the scrutiny work programme is now more effectively targeted and that the new structure have improved the performance of scrutiny

During discussion of the outcome of the survey, scrutiny councillors have expressed the need for greater clarity regarding the lead scrutiny councillor role and this is being picked up through the 08/09 member development programme.

The robustness of the revised scrutiny structures will continue to be monitored during 08/09.

Conclusions

There are many challenges to scrutiny on the horizon: we welcome the opportunity for closer working with our partners, the Local Involvement Networks and with our residents, especially through the councillor call for action. We also relish the opportunity to work with our colleagues, both officers and councillors on the delivery of the council's ambition, to be one of the best in London by 2012

**Harrow Scrutiny Councillors
June 2008**