

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**15 JULY 2008**

Chairman: * Councillor Mark Versallion

Councillors: * Ms Nana Asante * Christopher Noyce
 * B E Gate * Anthony Seymour
 * Mitzi Green (1) * Mrs Rekha Shah
 * Ashok Kulkarni * Yogesh Teli
 * Janet Mote * Jeremy Zeid (3)

* Denotes Member present
 (1) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillor Paul Scott also attended this meeting to speak on the items indicated at Minutes 80 to 83 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**67. **Appointment of Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment of Councillor Mark Versallion at a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 May 2008 under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 11.2 as Chairman of the Sub Committee for the Municipal Year 2008/2009.

68. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Dinesh Solanki
 Councillor Phillip O'Dell

Reserve Member

Councillor Jeremy Zeid
 Councillor Mitzi Green

69. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 12 – Northwick Park Hospital Maternal Deaths

During consideration of this item, the following Members declared personal interests as set out below and remained in the room to participate in the discussion and decision relating to this item:

- (i) Councillor B E Gate stated that his wife and daughter were health-care practitioners;
- (ii) Councillor Janet Mote stated that her daughter was a paediatric nurse;
- (iii) Councillor Yogesh Teli stated that his uncle had been a patient at Northwick Park hospital;
- (iv) Councillors Ms Nana Asante and Mrs Rekha Shah stated that their children had been born at Northwick Park hospital.

Agenda Item 13 – Revenue and Capital Outturn 2007-08

During consideration of this item, Councillor Janet Mote declared a prejudicial interest in that she had been Portfolio Holder for Children's Services during the period under review. Accordingly, she left the room and took no part in the discussion on the item.

Agenda Item 15 – Best Value Performance Plan 2008-09

Councillor Janet Mote declared a prejudicial interest in that she had been Portfolio Holder for Children's Services during the outturn period referred to in the report. Accordingly, she left the room and took no part in the discussion on the item.

70. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

71. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor B E Gate as Vice-Chairman of the Sub Committee for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.

72. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2008 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

73. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.

74. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.

75. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.

76. **References from Council and Other Committees/Panels:**

RESOLVED: To note that no reports were received.

77. **Chairman's Report:**

The Chairman introduced the report, which set out issues considered by the Chairman since the last meeting of the Sub Committee.

RESOLVED: To note and endorse the content of the Chairman's Report.

78. **Northwick Park Hospital Maternal Deaths:**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Chief Executive of the North West London Hospitals NHS Trust. The Chief Executive informed Members that the occurrence of three maternal deaths and two further Serious Untoward Incidents within one financial year – 2007/08 – had been taken extremely seriously by the Trust, and it was as a result of the Trust's own governance arrangements that a multidisciplinary case review had taken place. A further review, chaired by a Non-Executive Director of the Primary Care Trust (PCT), with three expert independent clinicians on the Panel, had been set up to establish whether there were any underlying trends linking the three deaths. So far there was no reason to believe that this was the case, but the report would be available in August 2008 and presented initially to the Trust Board and thereafter to a meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the Coroner had not yet conducted a review of the recent maternal deaths at Northwick Park hospital.

The Chief Executive stated that the review report had been submitted to the Healthcare Commission acting as an independent regulator. The Commission would ensure that the review report had fulfilled its terms of reference and that the investigation had been conducted in a proper manner. It would take an external opinion on the findings of the review report. She stated that it was important to note that the number of women coming to give birth at Northwick Park hospital was in fact rising. There was no evidence that the local population was staying away from using the services at the hospital.

In response to a question from the Chairman about the Improvement Plan that had been put in place by the hospital, the Chief Executive stated that the hospital faced a competitive market when recruiting staff, the hospital had a high standard of professionalism and there was a joint responsibility on the authorities to ensure that pregnant women accessed services sooner rather than later. A multi-agency approach was needed, as the majority of pregnant women in Brent/Harrow did not access the appropriate services before the first 20 weeks of pregnancy.

The Chief Executive emphasised that the maternity unit used a clinical scorecard to monitor key indicators, for example, rates of Caesarean section and the number of women admitted to intensive care. The scorecard had been adopted as national best practice and allowed the Trust Board to monitor performance carefully and take supportive and corrective action when necessary.

Answering additional questions from Members, the Chief Executive reported that the current national maternal mortality rate was 14 deaths per 100,000 maternities. On this basis the Trust could expect to see in the region of three deaths every four years, and there had been no deaths in the financial years 2005/06 and 2006/07. However, 60% of the cases presenting at the Trust were perceived to be high risk in terms of, for example, obesity, lack of primary health care in countries from which the women had arrived and as a result of which they suffered from poor health, their inability to access ante-natal care in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy and lack of English.

With reference to the lack of primary health care take-up among some groups of the population, a Member drew the Sub Committee's attention to a project organised in the past by the PCT Health and Race Forum, which offered health care for people who had not yet registered with a General Practitioner (GP).

The Chairman suggested that it might be appropriate for the Lead Scrutiny Members for Adult Health and Social Care to examine access by pregnant women to primary care when the review report was in the public domain. In addition, the relationship between the Council and the PCT with a view to making automatic referrals could also be looked at.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive of the North West London Hospitals NHS Trust for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) it be noted that the review report into the recent maternal deaths at Northwick Park hospital, currently with the Healthcare Commissions, would be presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee after being considered by the Trust Board. [See also Minute 69]

79. **Revenue and Capital Outturn 2007-08:**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Finance, setting out the Council's provisional revenue and capital outturn position for 2007-08. The Divisional Director, Finance and Procurement, presented the report and highlighted the following:

- a provisional forecast underspend of £4.7m;
- improved capacity, as a result of the underspend, to strengthen the Council's balance sheet and cover risks and liabilities more effectively, as well as increasing the Council's financial standing;
- compliance with the Council's reserves policy, with a provisional forecast balance of £3m;
- agreement reached between the Council and Primary Care Trust (PCT) in relation to clearing a long-standing debt.

Answering questions from Members, the Divisional Director reported that the underspend had been achieved as a result of early identification of problems and the avoiding of unessential spending. Budget monitoring was being enhanced, and any underlying issues relating to the underspend would be explored. The revenue underspend had been allocated as follows:

- £3.7m to cover risks and liabilities, £700,000 to be added to general balances and £300,000 to be carried forward.

Asked about the forecast capital underspend of around £20m, the Divisional Director reported that around £4.5m related to the Adults and Housing Directorate and £5.7m to Children's Services, and a total of £16m was being carried forward.

The officer answered further questions from Members, including:

- had inflation pressures been accounted for in the current budget? – inflation levels of 2.5% (pay) and 2% (non-pay) had been factored into the budget, with little flexibility;
- had there been any financial pressures as a result of the Stanley Road gas explosion? – not yet, but there might be an effect in the future.

Members agreed that issues such as any trend in litigation costs ought to be examined further. A Member suggested that questions relating to the Medium-Term Budget Strategy (MTBS) and the effect of the strategy on residents ought to be asked of the Leader of the Council at a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee Question and Answer session.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the trend in litigation costs be investigated further with initial discussions taking place at the next meeting of Scrutiny Chairmen;

(3) issues around the impact of the MTBS be raised at a future Question and Answer meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

80. **Council Improvement Programme Redevelopment:**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive, setting out the Council Improvement Programme (CIP) for the period up to March 2011. An officer presented the report and informed Members that, while the Council had a clear vision and priorities, with savings made and positive external judgements, the pace of change was not as quick as it could be and cross-departmental working was key to improving this. The management development programme encouraged both formal and informal cross-departmental working and provided information and toolkits to enable managers to manage effectively. The Council's Improvement Board process also sought to ensure that staff did not work in silos.

Asked about a specific CIP project aimed at reducing sickness absence across the Council, the Divisional Director, Human Resources and Development, reported that two out of four milestones had so far been achieved. However, he emphasised that achieving a reduction was reliant upon effective action by line management.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on the CIP thanked the Scrutiny Manager involved in the work of the Panel, and reported that he was optimistic about the progress of cross-departmental working. The Cabinet had welcomed the report of the Challenge Panel. Members' attention was drawn to the recommendations of the Challenge Panel.

After discussion on how best to add value to delivery of the CIP, Members agreed to refer a review of the CIP and the specific issue of customer service delivery to the next Chairman's meeting, to which officers and any interested Members, including Performance Lead Members and/or the appropriate Portfolio Holder, could be invited. In addition, the definition of 'avoidable contact' needed to be monitored. It was further agreed that the Chairman's meeting in future months would provide an ongoing opportunity to monitor the CIP and that outcomes from this discussion would be brought to the Sub Committee's attention using the standard tool of the regular Chairman's Report.

RESOLVED: To (1) note the content of the Corporate Improvement Programme;

(2) refer a review of the CIP and the specific issue of customer service delivery to the next Chairman's meeting, with interested parties invited to attend.

81. **Best Value Performance Plan 2008-09:**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive, setting out the draft Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and information about the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which would replace the BVPP. An officer reported that the Government had yet to publish detailed guidance on the CAA and, once this was received it would form part of a future training session for Members. As guidance on the CAA was awaited, the Sub Committee focussed on the BVPP.

The officer reported that performance had improved on 70 indicators, gone down on 24 and remained broadly unchanged on 25. A total of 58% of indicators were on or above target and 63% had improved on the previous year.

Members noted that the more useful indicators were being retained by the authority as a bench-mark for the future. The officer reported that some would be included in the

new National Indicator Set and the Council's Corporate Strategic Board had already agreed to keep some of the BVPP indicators to form the basis from which to develop local indicators. A Member commented on proposed legislation that would allow local authorities to scrutinise the police force. The information set out in the BVPP would be helpful at that time. The Scrutiny Officer reported that he would be briefing the Scrutiny Lead Members for Safer and Stronger Communities on the Policing Green Paper which would be issued soon.

Another officer referred to the training proposed for Members and suggested that Members identify at that time which indicators ought to be retained and monitored.

The Sub Committee agreed to refer to the Education Consultative Forum the issue of using percentages of pupils achieving various national curriculum levels to measure progress and achievement, as it was felt that these indicators encouraged progress towards an average, when more able pupils should be encouraged to achieve more.

RESOLVED: To (1) endorse the Best Value Performance Plan 2008-09;

(2) refer to the Council's Education Consultative Forum the issue of using percentages of pupils achieving various national curriculum levels to measure progress and achievement.

[See also Minute 69]

82. **Workforce Development Projects in the Council's Improvement Programme:**

The Sub Committee received a report of the Divisional Director, Human Resources and Development, updating Members on the workforce development projects in the Council Improvement Programme (CIP) following the report to the Sub Committee on 29 April 2008. The Director apologised to the Sub Committee for the fact that that no officer from the Human Resources and Development Directorate had been present at the 29 April meeting. The Director informed Members that the management development project was on track, and that the development project would be underpinned by the values that were being developed as part of the culture change project. The Director reported that the projects on workforce development and improving learning and development were also on track, and the progress of all the projects was being monitored at monthly meetings between the CIP project sponsors and the Chief Executive. Members welcomed the inclusion of milestones in the report.

In answer to a question from a Member, the Director informed the Sub Committee that the workforce development projects were achievable, although inevitably there were risks to be managed, as well as any unknown factors that might emerge.

Asked how staff had received the work being undertaken on culture change, the Director reported that there had been very positive feedback from the large group event led by Roffey Park and attended by 180 members of staff.

RESOLVED: That the report and progress on projects be noted.

83. **Scrutiny Scorecard:**

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive, setting out Scrutiny performance in the previous three months, as recorded in the Scrutiny Scorecard, and the proposed methodology for the Scrutiny Scorecard for 2008-09.

Members were concerned at the low level of Member attendance at scrutiny review meetings during quarter one, which mirrored the previous year's trend. It was essential that the Leaders of the Political Groups were made aware of this issue. During discussion on the percentage of recommendations approved by Cabinet and a perceived lack of recognition of Scrutiny's recommendations, the officer reported that a protocol now existed on relations between Cabinet and Scrutiny and that this would lead to an improvement.

RESOLVED: That the report, the scorecard and the proposed methodology for 2008-09 be noted.

84. **Reference to Overview and Scrutiny:**

The Chairman reported that this report ought to be disregarded as it was now intended to submit the minutes of meetings of the Sub Committee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for noting/agreeing any actions arising from the Sub Committee.

85. **Other Business:**Place Survey Challenge Panel

The Chairman provided Members with details of the forthcoming Challenge Panel, which would be held on 1 September 2008.

86. **Extension and Termination of the Meeting:**

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6.6 (ii) (Part 4F of the Constitution) it was:

RESOLVED: At (1) 10.00 pm to continue until 10.30 pm;

(2) 10.30 pm to continue until 10.45 pm;

(3) 10.45 pm to continue until 10.50 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.41 pm, closed at 10.48 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARK VERSALLION
Chairman