
REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2008

Chairman:	* Councillor Stanley Sheinwald	
Councillors:	* Mrs Margaret Davine * B E Gate * Ashok Kulkarni (2) * Julia Merison (1) * Jerry Miles * Mrs Vina Mithani	* Janet Mote * Phillip O'Dell (2) * Dinesh Solanki * Yogesh Teli * Jeremy Zeid (7)
Voting	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
Co-opted:	Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	* Mr R Chauhan † Mrs D Speel

* Denotes Member present
(1), (2) and (7) Denote category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

[Note: Councillor Paul Osborn, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services, attended this meeting to speak on item indicated at Minute 416 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATION I - Scrutiny Work Programme and Feasibility Reports

At its meeting on 4 September, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed the process for developing the Scrutiny Work Programme and considered a list of projects for inclusion in its Work Programme for 2009/10. Members now received a report detailing the projects that were underway during 2008 and those intended for 2009/10. It also set out those matters considered by way of reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

The Committee, having prioritised its projects as part of its Work Programme, noted the requirement set out under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 12.1 and 12.3, and accordingly

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Work Programme at Appendix 1 to these minutes, be noted.

(See also Minute 421)

PART II - MINUTES

408. **Welcome:**
 The Chairman welcomed members of the public, the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services, Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate Director of Children's Services, Head of Communications and the Service Manager dealing with complaints in Children's and Adults Services to the meeting. He also welcomed Fola Beckley, Scrutiny Officer, to her first meeting of the Committee.
- During the course of the meeting and upon their arrival, the Chairman welcomed Sarah Crowther, Chief Executive of Harrow Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Andrew Bland, Acting Director of Commissioning of Harrow PCT, to report on items relating to Alexandra Avenue and the PCT's Commissioning Strategy Plan.
409. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**
- RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-
- | <u>Ordinary Member</u> | <u>Reserve Member</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Councillor Mitzi Green | Councillor Phillip O'Dell |
| Councillor Manji Kara | Councillor Jeremy Zeid |
| Councillor Anthony Seymour | Councillor Ashok Kulkarni |
| Councillor Mark Versallion | Councillor Julia Merison |
410. **Declarations of Interest:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:
- Agenda Items 10/11 – Alexandra Avenue/Primary Care Trust's Commissioning Strategy Plan
- Councillor B E Gate declared a personal interest as his wife worked in a General Practice (GP) and his daughter occasionally worked in a GP. He would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.
- The Chairman (Councillor Stanley Sheinwald) declared personal interests in that he was Chair of the Carers' Partnership Group, and a patient at Northwick Park Hospital. He would remain in the Chair and take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.
- Agenda Item 12 – Children's Services Complaints Annual Report 2007-08
- Councillor Julia Merison declared a personal interest as she had been involved in the amalgamation of West Lodge School. She would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.
- Councillor Yogesh Teli declared a personal interest as his son was a pupil at West Lodge School. He would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.
- Councillor Janet Mote declared a prejudicial interest in that she had been a Member of the Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services when the amalgamation of West Lodge School, referred to in the report, had been considered. She would leave the room during discussion and decision relating to this item.
- Agenda Item 13 – Adult Services Complaints Annual Report (Social Care) 2007-08
- Councillor Yogesh Teli, having declared a personal interest in this item, stated that as an Assistant (Support Member) to the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing, he had not taken any part in the decision relating to this item, as a result of which his interest was not considered to be prejudicial. He would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to this item.
- Agenda Item 14 – Harrow Council Communications
- Following consideration of agenda item 14, the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services wished it to be recorded that he had been present at the meeting for this substantive item only and had no interest to declare.]

411. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following items be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances / Grounds for Urgency</u>
4. Minutes	Due to the proximity of meetings, the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2008 were not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item as a matter of urgency so that the minutes could be approved at the earliest opportunity.
9. Report from Lead Scrutiny Members	This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item as a matter of urgency so that they were briefed on the work carried out by the Scrutiny Lead Members.
15. Scrutiny Work Programme – Feasibility Reports	This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated as it was being consulted on. Members were requested to consider this item as a matter of urgency so that the outline Work Programme could be reported to the appropriate bodies.

(2) all items be considered with the press and public present;

(3) item 14 (Harrow Council Communications) be considered before after item 9 (Report from Lead Members).

412. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2008, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

413. **Public Questions/Petitions/Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 8, 9, and 10 (Part 4B of the Constitution) respectively.

414. **References from Council/Cabinet:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no references.

415. **Lead Scrutiny Members:**

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive, which set out matters that had been considered by the Scrutiny Performance and Policy Lead Members for Adult Health and Social Care and Sustainable Development and Enterprise between July and August 2008 and suggesting proposals for action by the Committee on various issues, in particular in relation to Adult Health and Social Care and Sustainable Development and Enterprise Lead Scrutiny Members.

Members deferred consideration in relation Wealdstone High Street and the type of investigation to be conducted as this matter was to be considered as part of item 15 (Scrutiny Work Programme) on the Committee's agenda.

RESOLVED: That (1) in relation to the Adults and Housing Transformation Plan, the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Adult Health and Social Care be requested to pursue scrutiny's input into the review of the individual budgets pilot scheme;

(2) in relation to Joint Commissioning of Learning Disabilities Service, it be ensured that the Inspection Report, to be published in December 2008, be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2009;

(3) the Corporate Director of Adults and Housing be requested to check the comparative data around the abuse of the Blue Badge Scheme and the new approach taken by Birmingham City Council and report appropriately to the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Adult Health and Housing;

(4) the Joint Strategic Assessment Needs (JSNA), currently being consulted on, be included on the agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2009;

(5) the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise be requested to consider the outcome of the parking efficiency review at their next meeting;

(6) the Housing, Property and Infrastructure Officers be invited to attend the next meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise to discuss the performance issue of the Decent Homes Programme, and that, in the interim, more evidence be provided to the Scrutiny Policy and Performance Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise;

(7) no action be taken in relation to the Leisure Centre in light of the Cabinet decision concerning the Centre at Byron Park;

(8) in relation to the development on residents' back gardens, further information be collected and submitted to the Scrutiny Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise relating to the Council's own policy on residential development;

(9) the Sustainability Project proceed as initially set out in the feasibility study;

(10) the Performance Scrutiny Lead Members for Sustainable Development and Enterprise be requested to pursue the Asbestos Control Project by the Policy in conjunction with further investigations into Decent Homes work.

(See also Minute 421).

416. **Harrow Council Communications:**

Prior to the presentation from the Head of Communications, the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services stated that he was proud of the achievements of the Council's Communication Team and the work it had carried out to promote Harrow Council.

The Head of Communications informed the Committee that the initial focus had been to establish new systems of working. Forward planning, and a Communications Work Plan had helped deliver a strong and proactive team that had the confidence of the organisation. He shared the achievements of the past 6 months during which 58 out of 61 contract objectives had been achieved.

He outlined examples of campaign based communications and an overview of marketing communications, which had delivered on ten service campaigns. Harrow People, the Council's Magazine to local residents, was its flagship; the latest issue being 'fronted' by Terry Wogan, Britain's most popular Disc Jockey (DJ), who had supported the re-opening to Wealdstone High Street to traffic. The Council had been short listed for a national award for 'Best Civic Magazine' in the country.

Internal Communication had been improved and the staff survey had shown that staff felt informed about the Council. Proactive media relations had helped build reputation and the Council was receiving good coverage both locally and nationally. In terms of the publicity for scrutiny, there was more the Council could do to promote it. The Head of Communications referred to the protocol which involved a closer working relationship with scrutiny.

In response to questions, about the publicity given to the Committee meeting held on 23 September 2008 at Northwick Park Hospital, the Portfolio Holder stated that, unfortunately, the timings had not coincided with the issue of Harrow People. A similar problem was being experienced with Question Time sessions held by the Council. In addition, there was a general problem with public engagement at a majority of the meetings held by the Council and he was open to suggestions on how these could be improved. Posters and direct mailing were costly and did not always achieve the objectives. All press releases issued were not always considered 'news worthy' by the local press and were not included in the newspapers.

The Portfolio Holder, Assistant Chief Executive and Head of Communications responded to additional questions as follows:-

- of the 61 contract objectives, the Place Shaping Survey was not 'on track';
- another contract objective, namely Public Notice Boards, was 'amber' and that it was intended to pass this area from the Communications Team to the Council's Community Development Team. The Notice Boards needed replacing and were not a key priority for the Communication Team, which needed to focus on enhancing other areas of communications;
- there were plans to display 'Know Your Councillor' posters or details of Ward Councillors on Notice Boards and these areas would be the subject of further discussions;
- the frequency of the 'Harrow People' magazine needed to be balanced with the cost of producing it. Some local authorities produced fortnightly newspapers and samples of these publications would be made available in Group Offices for comment;
- the reader survey results should be taken as indicative only as the survey was 'self selective'. The Harrow People magazine was now more focussed and a better designed publication. The aim was to ensure a well informed resident and checks were being made on a quarterly basis to ascertain how well people felt informed and through what methods – Harrow People magazine, posters, press or leaflets. The reputation of the Council needed to be protected by positive media coverage, as negative publicity had a knock-on effect on all concerned. It was essential that the Council focused on priority issues and made residents aware of the problems it faced. Various surveys were monitored and mapped according to socio-economic groups, Wards, ethnicity and age. The Council's Corporate Improvement Board also looked at performance on a regular basis with a view to identifying hotspots. The Portfolio Holder invited the Committee to examine the performance data;
- all issues raised would be discussed at the internal Communications Working Group meetings, including the suggestion of 'advertising' at doctors' surgeries and allowing the community to use Notice Boards;
- there was a need to manage people's expectations and, at the same time, respond quickly to specific situations so that residents were kept informed. It was essential that officers and Members passed on information so that actions could be taken as a matter of priority. Educating people was a key ingredient as evidence showed that there was a correlation between how informed people felt and their perception of the Council. Communication was therefore vital and was considered to be a cost-effective way of improving perception.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder, Assistant Chief Executive and Head of Communication for the presentation and stated that scrutiny looked forward to working closely with them.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(See also Minute 410).

417.

Alexandra Avenue:

Sarah Crowther, Chief Executive of Harrow PCT, introduced the report, which set out the key strategic aims for the Alexandra Avenue Polyclinic, explained the 'Hub and Spoke' model of delivery and how it would improve services for patients. The report described the PCT's vision for new and integrated services and stakeholder engagement.

Members voiced their concerns in relation to the site at Mollison Way. In response, Sarah Crowther and Andrew Bland, stated that:-

- the PCT shared the concerns expressed over inadequate access, parking and public transport facilities available to the site which would affect the vulnerable.

It was intended to make representations to the Transport for London (TfL) with a view to improving the frequency of buses travelling to the site;

- an application for planning permission might be necessary as the Polyclinic was likely to bring-in a disproportionate number of patients. Another option that was being discussed was a 'Park and Ride' system; however, the PCT did not fully support this idea;
- one of the perceived strengths of polyclinics were integrated IT systems which would ensure that they worked as the 'Hub' to the General Practices (GPs) and therefore share patient information. It was intended to trial this at Alexandra Avenue but the integration of systems would be staggered;
- there was no agreement on the number of practices that would be located at Alexandra Avenue and none would be coerced to moving there. Discussions with the Strategic Health Authority were ongoing with a view to agreeing a restricted procurement for GP services at Alexandra Avenue. It was possible that multi-practices might be able to locate at Alexandra Avenue and maintain their own GP service, so as not to disadvantage the local communities by relocating totally. Alternatively, those practices that were in based in inaccessible premises might want to relocate to Alexandra Avenue;
- there would be no change in the out-of-hours provision. It was expected that the polyclinic at Alexandra Avenue would remain open until 8.00 pm. It would provide walk-in services and help take the pressures off Ealing and Hillingdon Hospitals Accident and Emergency Units. An Urgent Care Centre (UCC) was open at Northwick Park Hospital from 8.00 - 11.00 pm from Tuesday-Friday and until 12 midnight on Saturday-Monday;
- the PCT had already invested in Alexandra Avenue and the proposal to make it a polyclinic was a step-up. The additional costs associated with this were budgeted at £3m. All services that would be part of a polyclinic were currently available at Alexandra Avenue;
- currently, there were no proposals to locate a pharmacy at Alexandra Avenue as these were accessible in the vicinity of the premises. The PCT would make a judgement on this matter when proposals had been developed further. However, it was hoped that pharmacies would mirror the opening hours of GPs;
- in relation to the recent adverse press attention received by the PCT and Northwick Park Hospital, it was important to note that the Accident and Emergency Service at the Hospital had improved and additional resources had been invested there to help with the discharge of patients suffering from mental health problems. The number of beds available had been increased and an UCC had been opened to assist the Hospital. The response of the Ambulance Service had also improved. There had been a vast improvement in emergency care in Harrow and the PCT would be disappointed if the public perception was different.

The Chairman thanked Sarah Crowther and Andrew Bland for the report and responding to questions.

RESOLVED: The report and the concerns expressed by Members be noted.

(See also Minute 410).

418. **Primary Care Trust's Commissioning Strategy Plan:**

The Chief Executive of Harrow Primary Care Trust (PCT) reported verbally on the Trust's Commissioning Strategy Plan. She stated that the following areas would be addressed:-

- Maternity services – issues relating to smoking during pregnancy and obesity;

- General Practices – standards of service provided and use of score cards;
- Children and Young People – development of a balanced paediatric service in Harrow and the provision of a specialised service in Harrow;
- Infection Control – focus on building links around immunisation, priorities around vascular health, screening programmes, supporting primary and secondary care;
- Vascular treatment – focus on care for patients who were suffering from Stroke. A clear focus and investment were essential elements to this area. It was noted that the Healthcare for London would be consulting on London-wide proposals in the care of Stroke. Diabetes and Obesity were related issues that needed addressing so that services could be tailored to meet needs. Stroke was linked to both diabetes and heart disease, the latter of which was related to smoking. Social marketing was a key component to making people aware of the risks associated;
- Sexual health/alcohol related problems – there was a corporate and social responsibility to address these issues and more work was required in these areas;
- Community Mental Health Services – there was a need to support community mental health teams with a view to reducing costs;
- Learning Disability – to build on new areas of work and offer an Annual Health Check.

The Chief Executive stated that the key aspect for all health services was to offer choice. She responded to questions from Members, as follows:-

- in respect of provision for Stroke care in the Harrow area, all Trusts would be invited to submit bids to allow them to set up specialist units and it would be for the North West London Hospital NHS Trust to submit its own bid. Designation criteria would be set for submission of bids;
- screening for men for Prostrate Cancer - it was intended to establish pathways/referrals;
- the outcome of the consultation on Mollison Way surgery was awaited;
- the PCT would be meeting with the Council in relation to care for Children and Young People. The PCT supported the establishment of a Children's Trust. The legalities and governance arrangements around the setting up of the Trust were important and the issue of MMR vaccination needed further discussions.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the Plan would be strategic in nature and look forward to the next 5-years. Focus and investment would be phased-in to ensure that the Plan was delivered. It was not envisaged that existing services would suffer but that they would change for the better.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for the presentation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(See also Minute 410).

419. **Children's Services Complaints Annual Report 2007-08:**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which set out information about complaints made during 1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008 under the Complaints and Representations Procedures established through the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 2006 and the Council's Corporate Complaints' Procedure.

An officer introduced the report and stated that no complaints had been investigated by the Ombudsman during the year in question but that there had been an increase in

Stage 1 complaints which ought to be welcomed. The Directorate's performance in dealing with complaints had been exceptional.

The officer explained that since March 2008, the complaints in Safeguarding and Family Support and Fostering Adoption and Residential had been reduced. New categories in complaints had been introduced in order to produce meaningful data and provide a 'true' picture of complaints received. He was pleased to note that the number of complaints coming through the use of advocacy and from young people themselves was encouraging and positive, as it was empowering the young to be heard. Without mediation, some complaints would have escalated to Stage 2 Complaints' Process, and the advocacy service provided by the Council was unique within the country. Since March 2008, compensation payments had been reduced.

Members were informed that the government was consulting on changing the school complaints' procedure, details of which would be sent to schools and Members of this Committee. The government intended to introduce a Review Panel stage, in addition to the Ombudsman, to be managed by local authorities. This would have a profound impact on schools and the Council was well positioned to meet new challenges.

In response to questions from Members who were pleased with the report which they considered to be encouraging, the officer stated that the number of investigators had increased.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

420. **Adults Services Complaints Annual Report (Social Care) 2007-08:**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Adults and Housing, which provided information about complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008 relating to social care. The officer introducing the report undertook to provide a glossary to future meetings.

Members' attention was drawn to the number of complaints that had escalated to Stage 2 of the Complaint's Process and those that had been investigated by the Ombudsman. The Council's ambition was to reduce the large number of complaints in line with those received for Children's Services. The key messages in relation to Adult Services were that it was going through a challenging period at the time of the report (2007-08) but there had been a marked improvement in the last six-nine months. The target response time for Stage 1 Complaints was 75%, which some services had exceeded. As a result, the 'direction of travel' was moving in the right direction but the Directorate continued to face challenges, an aspect of which was a lack of continuity at officer level. Recent efforts made by the Directorate to reduce and deal with the number of complaints received would be reflected in the next report to the Committee.

The officer highlighted that the complaints received from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities needed to increase but he was pleased to report that the use of advocacy had increased. The Directorate was exploring how the current figures for advocacy could be increased further. There had been 3 Ombudsman investigations and all had been settled locally. Unlike some other London boroughs, the Ombudsman had not carried out full investigations and issued maladministration reports against the Council, which was a significant achievement for the Directorate. The officer clarified that the Ombudsman could choose to investigate a complaint at any stage of the Complaints' Process.

In response to questions, the officer outlined the compensation levels, and reported that mediation, as a way of resolving complaints, had been successful. Harrow Council had four qualified mediators. The officer added that new regulations would come in force in 2009, which would 'uniform' the complaints procedures for the National Health Services/Adults Social Care. The new regulations would present a significant challenge and it was expected that mediation would play a crucial role in this regard.

The Chairman congratulated the officer for an excellent report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

421. **Scrutiny Work Programme and Feasibility Reports:**

Members considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which set out the feasibility reports on the projects which were identified as priorities as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2009/10. The Scrutiny Manager stated that there was scope to include projects during 2008/10, however the Work Programme required submission to Council.

Some Members asked whether there was need to carry out a Challenge Panel on Council Communications, given that the presentation received that evening from the Council's Head of Communication on this subject had shown that 59 of the 63 Indicators/Contract Objectives had been met. A Member commented on the reasons why a Scrutiny Challenge Panel would be helpful, noting there appeared to be dissatisfaction in the way the Council communicated key messages to its residents, of which education was a key aspect. Another Member also commented that dissatisfaction could be due to the setting of wrong indicators.

The Scrutiny Manager advised that the focus of the Challenge Panel on Council Communications would be as follows:-

- how effectively the outcomes of the 'Hear Say' Review had been implemented;
- best practice in addressing Fear of Crime;
- how 'difficult' messages ought to be communicated.

Another Member commented on the limited Councillor resources available and the need to ensure that the programme was not overloaded to ensure that the reviews conducted were robust. He was of the view that two of the five reviews, namely Promoting Sustainability and the Adult and Housing Transformation Programme Action Plan, were crucial and should be accorded high priority. It was felt that a review on Wealdstone could be delayed due to external factors. It was noted that out of the five reviews, feasibility reports had been produced in respect of four of the five reviews. The Scrutiny Manager assured the Committee that there were no issues regarding the funding arrangements for staffing within the Scrutiny Team.

Members were also informed that once the Voluntary Sector Review had been finalised, staff would concentrate on the Review of the Budget.

RESOLVED: That (1) the feasibility reports on 'Promoting Sustainability', 'Adults and Housing Transformation Programme Action Plan', 'Council Communications' and 'A New Start for Wealdstone' be agreed;

(2) the projects for 2009/10 be undertaken in the priority order set out at Appendix 1 to these minutes;

(3) the report be referred to Cabinet for comment on the areas for consideration, the feasibility of the projects and their timing;

(4) Members be invited to volunteer for Chairmanships for each of the Projects.

(See also Recommendation I and Minute 415).

422. **Extension and Termination of Meeting:**

In accordance with the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 6.6(ii) (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At (1) 10.00 pm to continue until 10.20 pm

(2) at 10.20 pm to continue until 10.25 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.31 pm, closed at 10.25 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR STANLEY SHEINWALD
Chairman