

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	18 March 2010
Subject:	Response to Sustainability Review
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director Place Shaping Brendon Hills, Corporate Director Community and Environment
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Susan Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety Councillor Marilyn Ashton, Portfolio Holder for Planning Development and Enterprise Councillor Jean Lammiman, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Reference from Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 February 2010 Appendix 2 – Report considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Appendix 3 – Report of the Sustainability Standing Review Group

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a response to the recommendations from a Scrutiny Review Group in relation to the Sustainability Review. The review was commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore how far

the Council had progressed with incorporating sustainability into its objectives and priorities.

Recommendations:

That

- (1) the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review Group in respect of Economic Sustainability be noted;
- (2) with the exception of the distribution of a comprehensive leaflet, the recommendations on Environmental Sustainability be accepted;
- (3) the recommendations in respect of Community Sustainability be noted and reflected in the Community Cohesion Action Plan.

Reason: (For recommendations)

The Council is meeting the recommendations in respect of the Economic Sustainability made in the Sustainability Review and will continue to do so through the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan and Economic Development Action Plan.

To note the work relating to Environmental Sustainability.

To ensure that the recommendations in relation to Community Sustainability will be reflected in the Community Cohesion Action Plan.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 20 January 2010 and undertook a Review of Sustainability. The review included Environmental sustainability, Economic sustainability, and Community sustainability.

Options considered

None.

Background and Current Situation

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

In respect of Economic Sustainability, a Responding to the Recession Challenge Panel was established. The Panel set out 5 recommendations to respond to the Recession. The Recommendations were as follows:

1. The Council and its partners should consider how to make better use of all the assets in the borough such as libraries, children's centres and the premises of partner agencies. This is in keeping with the direction

of change to share assets across the public sector. The panel recommend that some work is done to investigate how the council buildings are utilised to ensure they are being used to their full capacity. In particular, consideration should be given to address how/whether the council buildings are utilised on weekends. Consideration should also be given to possibly allowing voluntary and community sector organisations to use spare booths in Access Harrow. In addressing the latter point it should be ensured that the councils Third Sector Strategy is considered.

2. Communication to residents and small businesses should be an ongoing process. Better information to residents and local businesses should be provided about where to go for different services and support should be targeted and consistent. The Council provided guidance to residents and businesses during the height of the recession and though the recession is technically over, many of the negative implications of the recession are ever present, further guidance and support should be issued.

Creative means and methods should be applied to disseminate the information for example through inserts in council tax documents, Harrow People, road shows etc. Communication to businesses should be done in collaboration with Harrow in Business and the Chamber of Commerce.

3. Some consideration should be given to acquiring funding for the voluntary and community sector through other means for example through the private sector. The Council, voluntary and community sector should work with the private sector to maximise their investment.
4. The Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) and other community and voluntary organisations provide a valuable service to local residents through volunteers. Some consideration should be given as to how to support the advertisement of volunteering positions in the borough more effectively.
5. The Council has put in place a number of measures and interventions during the recession, this needs to be reviewed at a later date to assess how successful the various initiatives have been and how they can evolve to support economic recovery.

The following outlines the current situation in respect of the areas that fall within the Place Shaping Directorate

6. The Council's employment projects are working in libraries and children's centres. We have agreements in place with Jobcentreplus in respect to referrals to Council projects, and advertising vacancies. The Council has also introduced a Job Brokerage scheme which ensures vacancies are initially advertised to unemployed Harrow residents before going to the wider world.
7. On 12 March 2010 a new edition of "Business Matters" the A to Z of services will be sent to 5,000 businesses in the borough, this includes advice on business support. The Council's website is, and will continue to be updated to provide information on new initiatives and projects as

they are announced. In October 2009, Harrow Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Business Link in London with the intention of securing and promoting additional support for Harrow businesses. In November 2009, Harrow Council signed a Consultation Accord with the Federation of Small Businesses, and is using the FSB as a conduit to promote business support schemes. Regular liaison meetings are held with North West London Chamber of Commerce, and both the Chamber and West London Business are used to promote business support initiatives. This is through their websites and direct contact to their members. In addition the council is mailing details of business support initiatives directly to companies registered on the Harrow Business Directory.

8. The Council worked with the Harrow Association of Voluntary Service (HAVS) to ensure that the Greater London Enterprise (GLE) delivered a workshop on the Community Grants programme in the summer. This was the first time such a workshop had been held in the borough. GLE reported that two local organisations secured funding. Harrow Council has leveraged financial support from the private sector, but this has covered employment and business support initiatives. For example the Council is working with contractors to create Apprenticeships in construction, with private contractors paying the whole wage and supervision cost of the Apprentices. An element of private sector match funding is provided in two business support programmes the council is involved with. The Council is providing match funding (in officer time) to Harrow in Business's Invest for Success programme, and West London Business' Gateway Asia programme.
9. Volunteering opportunities have been advertised in Harrow People, and existing employment initiatives, such as Xcite, have promoted volunteering to their clients.
10. The Recession Busting Group, which includes Harrow Council, Harrow Primary Care Trust, Jobcentreplus, Harrow CAB, HAVS, and Harrow in Business produced an Economic Recovery Plan in June 2009 and will review the plan in quarter 2 of 2010/2011.

It is felt that the Council is already meeting the recommendations made in the Sustainability Review and will continue to do so through the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan and Economic Development Action Plan. The Economic Development team are currently engaging with the borough's large employers to encourage local recruitment, and to promote volunteering and climate change mitigation strategies. Large private sector companies in Harrow have Corporate Social Responsibility policies. These focus on volunteering and the green agenda. None cover funding for voluntary and community sector.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made for the environmental sustainability part of the review are:

11. Whilst taking into account that there is a need for a certain level of technical language, the language used in the strategy should be clear, concise and accessible to a range of different readers. Therefore the strategy should be re-written to achieve this.
12. A summary should be attached to the strategy which shows exactly what the strategy's goals are.
13. The strategy should contain and clearly communicate what the council has already done to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
14. A comprehensive action plan, subject to amendment as and when required, should be included in the strategy. The strategy should not only specify how it will tackle climate change in terms of the proposed actions but also have targets it has set for itself, state how it will progress, how it will measure its progress, a timescale to achieve these actions, the expected impact of undertaking said actions as well as a named lead responsible officer for each action. As items and actions are completed the action plan should be reviewed and amended.
15. The Council should take a more proactive lead in educating and promoting climate change to residents and its own officers. It should not rely on the momentum which is being built up or on national campaigns.
16. A comprehensive book/leaflet which draws together all the basic things that can be done, how they should be done, where they can be done as well as any potential funding that can be obtained to help residents stem climate change should be published and sent to each household.
17. The Council and its officers should not only be educating and promoting issues related to climate change but should take a tougher line internally about their own actions and policies so as to lead the way / be exemplars to Harrow residents.
18. The Climate Change Strategy should be more joined up and integrated with other plans and strategies to be more effective in reducing climate change. It should fully state what it can bring to the other strategies and how it can, where applicable, ameliorate them.

Response

The part of the review covering environmental sustainability took place during the consultation period for the draft climate change strategy and the recommendations that were made were considered in formulating the report to Cabinet and the final strategy. The Climate Change Strategy was adopted by cabinet at the meeting on 17 September 2010, and the strategy was accompanied by an extensive action plan. The valuable contribution made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was acknowledged in the Cabinet

report (Climate Change Strategy – Adoption paragraph 12), and the strategy and the action plan incorporated all but one of the recommendations.

The recommendation not implemented to date is recommendation 6 concerning a comprehensive leaflet to be published and sent to all households setting out practical steps that could be taken and potential funding sources. This has not been implemented because it would entail a cost that has not been budgeted for, and as information about grants and funding sources is not clear for the medium term, there is a risk that such a leaflet would become quickly obsolete.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in respect of community sustainability were:

19. We remain concerned about the potential impact the recession could have on our diverse community and urge that the council does not become complacent in its efforts to support the community to continue to develop constructively. As an example, we welcome initiatives such as the 'Declaration of Unity' which followed attempts by outside organisations to undermine the cohesiveness of our community, but would urge that these initiatives are part of a broader, strategic approach to community development and not one-off reactive projects.
20. Whilst we recognise that this conference has not offered an in-depth investigation of the complexities of maintaining a cohesive community, it has identified a number of issues which should be borne in mind in the council's ongoing work. To this end, we recommend that the debate which has started, particularly around the nature of community and the nature of cohesion is continued. It is only through this open and honest exchange of views that we can move forward together as a strong and cohesive community.
21. In this context we also recommend that the findings of this conference are referred to the Corporate Director of Community and Environment for inclusion in the refresh of the Community Development Strategy.
22. Consideration should be given to the recommendations made by young people interviewed as part of the community cohesion part of the review.

Response

The Corporate Director for Community and Environment welcomes the recommendations of the Sustainability Review including those of the young people. He is particularly pleased to see the engagement of young people in this review. The recommendations will be fully considered as part of the development of a Community Cohesion Action plan, (currently underway) and he will seek to ensure that they are reflected in this Plan.

Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implications in continuing to take this work forward. The financial implications were incorporated into the report on the Climate Change Strategy.

Performance Issues

The work being undertaken contributes to the council's LAA target, NI 152 Working Age People on Out of Work Benefits. That by *Quarter 2 May 2011 Harrow will extend the lead over the England average rate to at least 2.5 percentage points.*

The report also contributes to the following:

NI 185 **CO2 emissions from the council's estate – including schools - and operations** – including our service partners (Mouchel, Kier and Leisure Connections).

The baseline year is 2008/9. The reporting deadline was July 31st 2009.

Collecting data was a considerable challenge for the initial year and it is expected that the quality of data management will improve as the scheme becomes more mature. Confidence levels for gas and electricity usage statistics are high as a result of the council's policy of centralised procurement of energy. Data for other emissions such as vehicle fuel is less robust particularly in relation to car allowances, school trips, and service partners' sub-contractors. Future improvements in data collection may mean that the base level of emissions increases as people become more aware.

The Climate Change Strategy agreed an annual reduction of 4% in CO2 emissions from the councils' estate and operations.

This reduction will help to deliver the new commitment, the Carbon Reduction Commitment, which starts in April 2010. Under this scheme the council will need to purchase carbon allowances to cover its major energy (gas and electricity) use. The total number of allowances available will gradually be reduced and will need to be purchased under an auction system.

Delivering a 4% reduction will take a concerted effort to reduce energy consumption, use energy more efficiently and install renewable technologies where these are appropriate.

NI 186 **Per capita CO2 emissions in the local authority area.**

This is an LAA target.

A total reduction of 11.5% by 2010/11 (2006/7 baseline). Data is supplied by the government annually

NI 187 **The percentage of people in receipt of income benefit who live in houses with a SAP rating less than 30** (The government's definition of a home with a low energy efficiency rating). It is determined by a random annual survey of 1% of all households.

Note: SAP rating is a standard assessment procedure for measuring the energy efficiency of housing. Scores range from 0 to 100. Higher scores are better.

The council has made good progress in delivering the Decent Homes standards to council housing.

The government's proposed Heat and Energy Saving Strategy (HESS) should mean that by 2015 the vast majority of homes will have received cavity wall insulation and loft insulation. Homes with solid walls would be insulated by 2020. People on low incomes would be provided with these upgrades free of charge. Thus we can expect this indicator to improve over time.

However, the private rented sector (which accounts for 12% of the housing stock) will be more difficult to bring up to the required standard because of the difficulty landlords would have in recouping any investment via higher rents. This is particularly the case for houses in multiple occupation.

A fuel poverty strategy needs to be developed further.

NI 188

Adapting to climate change. The overall aim of this indicator is to embed the management of climate risks and opportunities across the local authority and partners services, plans and estates and to take appropriate adaptive actions where required,

Our self-assessment for 2008/9 was that Harrow was at Level 0 – getting started.

Level 1 requires a public commitment and impacts assessment: - we made our public commitment when we signed the Nottingham Declaration in 2007; we have completed an initial measurement of our emissions; Climate Change has also been incorporated into the Sustainable Community Strategy and so is now part of the LSP's strategic planning; the LDF also incorporates policies on climate change and we have adopted the Sustainable Design SPD.

This report envisages that revised guidance for committee reports will direct authors to the Nottingham Declaration website, which gives comprehensive guidance as to how climate change may affect service areas in the future and this will help the process of raising awareness of the issues when policy is being formulated.

We are working on a Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP), which would help the council and the LSP to understand the physical vulnerabilities specific to the locality. Without this it would be difficult to demonstrate that we have achieved Level 1 and further progress to Level 2 – comprehensive risk assessment; Level 3 – comprehensive action plan; and, Level 4 – Implementation, monitoring and continuous review would be more difficult.

- NI 189** **Flood and coastal erosion risk management.**
- We have completed our Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and understand our current risks associated with rainfall.
- NI 194** **NO_x and PM₁₀ emissions from the council's estate – including schools - and operations – including our service partners (Mouchel, Kier and Leisure Connections).**
- The baseline year is 2008/9. The reporting deadline was July 31st 2009.
- This is very closely linked to NI 185. In general, actions to reduce CO₂ will result in reductions on NO_x and PM₁₀. Having established baseline measurements via this indicator we are now in the position where we understand our major sources of NO_x and PM₁₀ and where changes in practice will have beneficial effects.
- The Council has set a target of 4% annual reduction in these emissions.
- NI 197** **Improved local biodiversity – active management of local sites**
- This is an LAA target.
- We currently have 10 (33.3%) of our 30 sites under active management. This is planned to increase to 20 (66.7%) by 2010/11
- NI 198** **Travel to school - mode of travel usually used**
- This is an LAA target.
- London authorities use data collected from schools with school travel plans, through the School Census; Mode shares to be calculated separately for children aged 5-10 and 11-16. Target to be set for the overall proportion of children travelling to school by car for one overall age group; 5-16.
- TfL reports London-wide and for boroughs to DfT; awaiting spreadsheet. DfT will check and upload to Data Hub
- Harrow has now reviewed baseline for 07/08 and agreed it with GOL and DfT. A 3% reduction was achieved in 2008/09 for the number of children travelling to school by car. There is a small modification proposed to GOL for this indicator for 2010-11.
- NI 1** percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. Current performance as measured by the Place survey is 76.2%. The target for 2011 is 79.8%.

Environmental Impact

The report provides a positive contribution towards Environmental Sustainability.

Part of the recession busting work has focussed on the provision of advice and guidance to residents, this includes addressing fuel poverty.

Risk Management Implications

A risk register is in place.

Equalities implications

The full range of activities to combat the effect of the Recession have had an Equality Impact Assessment at funding round stage. They are future job funds, childcare affordability programme and hardship relief fund.

Corporate Priorities

The work being undertaken to mitigate the impact of the recession, will "Improve Support for Vulnerable People" and to "Build Stronger Communities". Insofar as it provides opportunities and advice and guidance to residents and supports business survival, retention and growth, thereby protecting Harrow's employment base and building stronger communities.

The Environmental Sustainability proposals contribute towards the Deliver Cleaner and Safer Streets Corporate Priority.

The response to recommendations for community sustainability contribute towards the delivery of the Building Strong Communities corporate priority.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Kanta Hirani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 11 March 2010		
Name: Matthew Adams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 12 March 2010		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Alex Dewsnap



Divisional Director
Partnership,
Development and
Performance

Date: 11 March 2010

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: John Edwards



Divisional Director
(Environmental
Services)

Date: 11 March 2010

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mark Billington, Head of Economic Development,
020 8736 6533

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020 8736 6799

Kashmir Takhar, Head of Service, Community Development

Background Papers:

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

*(for completion by Democratic
Services staff only)*