

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

25 MARCH 2010

Chairman: * Councillor Mark Versallion

Councillors:

Ms Nana Asante	* Ashok Kulkarni
* John Cowan (1)	* Christopher Noyce
† B E Gate	* Mrs Rekha Shah
* Thaya Idaikkadar (3)	* Dinesh Solanki
* Manji Kara (2)	* Jeremy Zeid (3)

* Denotes Member present

(1), (3), (2), (3) Denote category of Reserve Members

† Denotes apologies received

153. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Janet Mote

Councillor Philip O'Dell

Councillor Anthony Seymour

Councillor Yogesh Teli

Reserve Member

Councillor Jeremy Zeid

Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

Councillor John Cowan

Councillor Manji Kara

154. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

Agenda Item 9 – Information Report – Extended Schools Review – Six Month Update

Councillor Dinesh Solanki declared a personal interest in that his daughter was a pupil at Belmont Middle School. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

155. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2010, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

156. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

157. References from Council and Other Committees/Panels

RESOLVED: To note that there were no references.

158. Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Divisional Director, Partnership, Development and Performance, which set out details of the Sub-Committee's activity in 2009/10 which was intended for inclusion in the Scrutiny Annual Report.

Members were invited to evaluate the effectiveness of the Sub-Committee since its inception. The following views were expressed by Members:

- A Member commented that whilst scrutiny had undertaken a number of good investigations, he was concerned that an important objective of scrutiny was to hold the executive to account. He added that whilst Portfolio Holders had attended meetings and been asked some searching questions, he was not convinced that this purpose had been achieved or that the Executive had been persuaded to change a decision following comments made by scrutiny;
- The chairman referred to the Question and Answer sessions undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the Leader and Chief Executive as a successful example of scrutiny and that there had been added value compared to the previous four years; scrutiny members had resisted a 'star chamber' approach;
- A Member suggested that to maintain credibility of scrutiny, the Chairman should be an opposition Member; another member commented that good chairmanship was more important;

- A number of Members referred to good work that had been undertaken with regard to the scrutiny of outside bodies such as the health partners and the Chairman gave the example of the Accord MP review as an area of scrutiny activity that had influenced Portfolio Holders and the Executive.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee's report on its activities be noted and included in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 April 2010.

159. INFORMATION REPORT - Extended Schools Review - Six Month Update

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which provided an update on the progress against the nine recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee report entitled Review of Extended Schools as Community Resources.

An officer introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- The report detailed the significant progress made on all nine recommendations. The Overview and Scrutiny report had been welcomed by the service and had had an impact and influence over the direction of travel;
- Recommendation two arose from the successful appointment of Parent Ambassadors in the Canons cluster. There were now 20 Parent Ambassadors working in 6 clusters;
- Recommendation five identified a number of areas of work for Governing Bodies of which elected Governors played a part.

In response to questions, Members were advised that:

- For the 2010/2011 plans the activities would be publicised across all clusters in a consistent way to ensure that every child received information about activities that they and their parents could access. This was significant progress as the clusters had been set up separately;
- The Council's Communication team would ensure that summer activities were listed in one publication, funded by all clusters, with a copy for each child. The information would be made widely available so that members of the community not directly involved with schools were aware of the services and activities available;
- Recommendation 9 had resulted in the review of progress under consideration by the Sub-Committee. The Community and Environment Group was consulting schools regarding an action plan to address how schools could make their buildings as open and accessible as possible;

- Schools needed advice as to how to reduce costs, particularly in order to make their premises available to the community at a reasonable cost.

The Sub-Committee recognised the progress made and noted that since September 2009 seven schools had been inspected and four had been graded as outstanding.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

160. INFORMATION REPORT - Strategy for People 2010/12

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development, presenting the draft Strategy for People 2010/12 which had been adopted by the Cabinet on 18 March 2010. It was noted that the document superseded the Strategy for People 2006/09 and aligned the Council's people management strategy to support achievement of the Council's vision to be recognised as one of the best London Council's by 2012. Members were advised that it had not been possible to present a draft to the Sub-Committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet in order to meet requirements under the Use of Resources audit on workforce planning. However, the range of issues that would be raised by the Better Deal for Residents programme would require the Strategy to be reviewed during 2010 to ensure it was fit for purpose. At that point, the views of the Sub-Committee or Overview and Scrutiny would be sought to finalising any changed Strategy.

The sub-committee was advised that:

- The framework for the Strategy had been developed by the Improvement and Development Agency;
- The date for the staff survey had been brought forward in order to capture the outcomes in the Strategy. Four main development areas had been identified: management of change, supporting people through performance management, improved communication within directorates, and improving the diversity of the workforce;
- A Workforce Strategy Group in each directorate, supported by Human Resources and Development, produced its own strategies and plans. Common areas were highlighted and gaps in strategies identified;
- This review resulted in the key workforce objectives, agreed by the Corporate Strategy Board, in the Strategy together with actions to address them.

In response to questions, the sub-committee was advised that:

- It was difficult to be precise why one fifth of the workforce had been identified by the staff survey as being disengaged or disenchanted. However, this percentage was low in comparison with a global study.

The staff survey indicated that 80% were engaged or enrolled against 60% in global statistics;

- Employees in their first year of employment at Harrow and those nearing retirement were particularly positive. Professional and technical staff tended to be less positive but this was consistent with surveys carried out in other organisations. The Individual Performance Appraisal and Development process (IPAD) was being monitored regarding meaningful discussion being held between staff and managers on work objectives and meeting agreed development needs. An action plan had been agreed with the Corporate Leadership Group and subsequently discussed at the Managers' Forum;
- Analysis of information between directorates, using a 'traffic light' system, had been undertaken to identify areas of concern. This would be progressed by either Department Management Teams, or the Workforce Strategy Group within each Directorate;
- There had been an improvement in response rates and staff perception in successive surveys;
- There were 273 agency workers at the end of February 2010 out of 7,500 employees. The Improvement Project included a reduction in agency and temporary staff, which was monitored on a monthly basis. New legislation would provide agency workers with the additional employment rights;
- The views of disabled staff, lesbian women, gay men and bisexual staff were less positive in the survey than other workers but again this was consistent with other organisations. The implementation of the Equalities Act would require the Council to hold data on the religion or belief held by staff and their sexuality. A Member expressed the view that the legislators should be advised that this requirement was unnecessary;
- Following discussion of the ethnicity by payband statistics, the officer undertook to include the number of posts within each payband in the Strategy. A sub-group of the Corporate Equality group was examining why external BAME applicants fared less well in 2008/09 than internal BAME applicants. The Improvement Programme included a project to support the recruitment of BAME staff into more senior positions;
- With regard to the age profile, staff could request continuation of working beyond age 65.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Use of Resources audit commenced on 15 March 2010. An interim review would be published subsequent to an interview with the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development and the HRD Strategy Manager, with the final outcome in July.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

161. Vote of Thanks

The Chairman thanked the Members for their work over the last four years.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.52 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARK VERSALLION
Chairman