

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

2009/10

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

This is the final annual report from the Overview and Scrutiny committee for the 2006 – 10 administration. Yet again, it has been a productive and very successful year. We were awarded a Centre for Public Scrutiny award for our review 'Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector' and the chairman was short listed for the 'Scrutineer of the Year' award in the Local Government Information Unit/CCLA C'lr 10 Achievement Awards. We were also delighted to hear in January of the commendation of our work offered by Right Honourable John Denham, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in a speech to a Centre for Public Scrutiny conference. The Secretary of State commented:

"In Harrow, they have used a scrutiny hearing to prompt a fundamental reappraisal of the way the council works with the third sector. And on a very important note, far from being confrontational on very difficult issues of funding and capacity, the effect of scrutiny has been strengthened relationships."

We are extremely proud to have been singled-out for such positive comments.

We have delivered a full work programme, covering a wide range of issues from our own financial processes, the plans and proposals of our colleagues in Health and the council through to partner performance during the recession. The section specifically on the Overview and Scrutiny committee provides more detail on the projects we have undertaken in the last year, and we would like to place on record our gratitude to the councillors and officers – from both within the council and from partner organisations – who have helped us to complete these projects. We feel that we have begun to forge constructive and effective working relationships across the board and we believe this places scrutiny on an excellent footing to be able to contribute to service improvement for the next four years.

Our revised structures have continued to develop, and following the I&DeA assessment of the process which we outlined last year, we have recognised the improvement areas required and will be looking to continue to address the issues raised as new scrutiny councillors take up their positions with the committee. In particular, a full programme of member induction for the new councillors is currently being designed and we are happy to have been able to use our own experience to help to design this programme.

We would like to publicly acknowledge the efforts of the scrutiny lead members who have championed their areas and have helped support scrutiny outside of the committees. Through their close monitoring of issues within their remit, we have been able to ensure that we continue to safeguard the best interests of the Harrow community.

Lead Scrutiny councillors discuss councillor calls for action



As we look back over the last four years, it is with pride that we consider the achievements we have made: we have supported the council's improvement agenda, contributing to both the comprehensive performance assessment and its successor the comprehensive area assessment; we have enhanced our budget scrutiny processes and have been able to make a

number of key strategic recommendations which we hope enhance our budget making processes; we have paid close attention to the exciting and extensive change proposals in health and have made a number of contributions to proposals for health improvement in the borough which have flowed from the proposal in Healthcare for London. By carefully monitoring the services available to local residents who experience strokes and by providing support to our colleagues in health, we have been able to assist the NW London Hospitals NHS Trust's successful bid to become an acute stroke service; we have monitored the development of polysystems for health care provision across the borough and we have challenged the performance of both the NW London Hospitals Trust and NHS Harrow. A full list of the projects we have undertaken since 2006 is attached in Appendix One.

None of our work would have been possible without the support from the staff in the Scrutiny Unit. We would like to thank all those who have helped us over the past 4 years including Nahreen Matlib, Heather Smith, Fola Beckley and Ed Hammond. Our special thanks must go to the head of the Scrutiny Unit, Lynne Margetts, without whose hard work, patience and dissemination of many differing complex issues brought to the attention of members, Scrutiny in Harrow could not have achieved what it has.

We have worked across political lines to ensure we bring a truly objective focus to our investigation. This is the only way that scrutiny can realise its potential and we would emphasise to our successors that independent, non-partisan, member-led scrutiny can and should make an enormous contribution to improving the wellbeing of the residents of the borough. We wish the next Overview and Scrutiny committee every success.



Councillor Stanley Sheinwald
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee



Councillor Mitzi Green
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee

REPORT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Overview and Scrutiny committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis and has met 14 times during the last municipal year and we have commissioned a range of review projects. In the paragraphs below we outline the highlights of our year of scrutiny.

At Committee

Question and Answer Sessions with the Leader and Chief Executive

As in previous years, the committee invited the Leader and Chief Executive to attend the committee to discuss corporate priorities and budget setting. At its meeting in July, the committee was able to discuss with the most senior officer and politician in the council, the impact of the recession on the council's finances, the likely budget outturn and the transformation programme 'Better Deal for Residents' which has been designed to support the council through the difficult fiscal period anticipated over the coming years.

At its meeting in January, the committee was able to hear from the Leader, the Portfolio holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services and the Chief Executive about the council's priorities for 2010/11 and the budget proposals which had been designed to deliver these priorities, including the proposals for a 0% increase in council tax. The final report from the Standing Review of the Budget – see below – was also considered as a part of this meeting and was submitted along with the comments from the committee to the meeting of Full Council which sets the budget.

Health Issues

Not surprisingly, given the high profile being given in the capital to the Healthcare for London proposals resulting from the Darzi review, health issues have proved to be a priority for the year. We have received reports regarding a range of proposals to modernise healthcare in the borough which have derived from Healthcare for London. The report from the Adult Health and Social Care leads summarises these but we would like to place on record our gratitude to the many representatives from health who are working with us to safeguard the health of local people. We feel that as a committee and especially via the leads, we have now developed an excellent working relationship with health colleagues which means that they can be confident in the challenge they receive from us and we can rely on the prompt and impartial advice that they provide to the committee.

Specific issues which have been considered by the committee include:

- Improving surgical services for children and young people in hospitals
- North West London acute services review
- Influenza pandemic plan
- Polyclinic provision in East Harrow
- Children's cancer services
- The development of an Integrated Care Organisation

Consultation on future health care has been a priority



The committee has also developed its relationship with Harrow Local Involvement Network (LINK). The committee has agreed a joint working protocol with Harrow LINK and received information about its communications policy.

We are delighted that the Chairman of the LINK, Mr Julian Maw, has been able to attend the majority of our meetings this year and we were particularly pleased that Julian was able to participate in the challenge panel that was set up to consider the detail of the proposed Integrated Care Organisation. We were also pleased that Harrow LINK was represented at the joint challenge panel held with Brent to consider the implications of the acute services review. We look forward to continuing to develop a positive relationship with our colleagues at Harrow LINK.

Councillors were also extremely grateful to council officers and representatives of Care UK who attended committee in the autumn to help us to investigate the performance of our homecare contract following disclosures on the BBC's Panorama programme which suggested performance in this area was not as high as might be expected. We were reassured by their positive and proactive responses to our enquiries.

Community Safety Issues

In line with our duties to scrutinise the work of local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and to consider community safety issues, the committee met with the Borough Commander, Dal Babu and Cllr Susan Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety, to discuss the crime priorities of the borough. Although Harrow remains a low-crime borough, it is important that we continue to monitor the effectiveness of our partnership working with police and ensure that the positive messages regarding community safety in the borough give confidence to our residents and improve the quality of their lives.

Meeting the Portfolio Holders

One of our key roles is holding the executive to account and one of the ways that we do this is to invite Cabinet portfolio holders to the committee to discuss specific aspects of their area of responsibility. As the table below shows, this year, in addition to our biannual meeting with Leader of the council, we have met with seven portfolio holders and three of them more than once. Issues raised during these discussions have included:

- Council's communication strategy
- Comprehensive Area Assessment results
- Third Sector Strategy
- Waste Management Strategy
- Educational Attainment
- Housing Revenue Account

We feel we have developed a constructive relationship with colleagues on Cabinet and hope that the challenge we offer to their portfolio is adding to the general improvement in services that is the priority for all of us. We hope that our successors can continue to perfect this creative tension.

Review Programme

In addition to our committee meetings, a significant amount of work has been undertaken in reviews. In 2006 we introduced new scrutiny methodologies: standing reviews, light touch reviews and challenge panels. These approaches have meant that we can undertake more proportionate investigations of the issues we have included in our work programme. They have proved an excellent addition to our resources.

We outline below the projects we have commissioned this year. The programme is slightly smaller than in previous years in order to accommodate the reporting process in election year.

Grants Criteria

During our project 'Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow' which investigated the relationship between the council and colleagues in the Third Sector, a range of concerns were raised about the current panel-led approach to grants. These were:

- Lack of clarity about what the process is actually for
- Lack of priorities in awarding grants
- Concerns about the transparency of the process
- Concerns about the appropriateness of criteria
- Lack of effective appeals process
- Links with other commissioning processes are weak
- Management of information in this area is weak
- Short-termism of the grants process
- The timeliness of the process
- The application process
- The need to strengthen monitoring arrangements
- Grant awards do not match the amounts bid for

As a result, changes to the grant making process were proposed and were presented to a scrutiny challenge panel for comment. The panel made ten recommendations to the Grants Advisory Panel and seven of these were accepted outright with the other three accepted in principle with some comment

Neighbourhood Champions

This innovative scheme, introduced by the Council towards the end of 2009, was considered by a scrutiny challenge panel early in the New Year in order to ensure that all of the risks of such a scheme had been identified and addressed. At the time of writing this annual report, the challenge panel is finalising its report and we ask that our successors ensure it is submitted to the next administration if this remains appropriate.

Response to acute paediatrics services NHS consultation

This challenge panel is discussed in greater detail in the Adult Health and Social Care lead members' report. We would comment however, that the panel marked a departure from traditional scrutiny processes in that, for the first time, we discussed the implications of proposed changes to a service with another borough's scrutiny councillors.

This innovation meant that the efficiency of our own challenge panel process was replicated in another borough and allowed our health colleagues to address the concerns of both ourselves and Brent Council in a single meeting. We recommend that the next Overview and Scrutiny committee considers undertaking similar partnership projects in future particularly as the interests of boroughs begin to coalesce around such issues as shared services and the 'Total Place' agenda.



Proposals may improve services to our youngest residents

Response to East Harrow polysystem NHS consultation

More information on this project is included in the Adult Health and Social Care lead members' report.

Standing Review of the Budget, Phase 2

The standing review was set up in 2007 and marked a significant change to the way in which scrutiny considered the budget. With a brief to consider some of the strategic issues impacting on the council's financial stability, the standing review has hopefully been able to point to a number of improvements which might be made to the Council's processes. In January, the review produced the report from its final phase, which considered:

- Asset management
- Shared services
- Revenue generation

The report's recommendations were agreed by Cabinet and were submitted to Full Council along with the budget papers for 2010/11.

This has been a significant improvement in the way that scrutiny considers the budget in Harrow and as a result, the outgoing Overview and Scrutiny committee has recommended to its successors that the standing review is re-established in the next administration.

Sustainability Phase 2 and 3

The detail from this review is included in the report from the Sustainable Development and Enterprise leads. However, we would comment that this review has also used innovative processes through which to undertake its investigations. We are particularly proud of the conferences and workshops which managed to pull together the views of a wide range of stakeholders in an efficient and effective manner. We would observe however, that this review has only managed to scratch the surface of its brief and, in particular, the impact of the recession on our residents, our business community and our own services is something which will continue to need to be monitored. As such, this is another project which the Overview and Scrutiny committee has recommended is picked up by its successors.

Transitions Scoping workshop

As our work programme had to be finalised promptly this year to enable preparations for the election to commence, we were disappointed not to have the time to investigate the ease of transition from children to adults services. However, as we consider this is such an important piece of work, we decided to consider how this project might be scoped if it is picked up, as we have recommended, by the next Overview and Scrutiny committee. This scope has been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny committee and has been commended to our successors.

This was an excellent process and allowed officers and councillors to agree what the focus for a subsequent project might be. We recommend that in future, all such in-depth investigations start with a scoping workshop as this can ensure that there is agreement across the board to the investigation and can ensure the buy-in of all stakeholders.

Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

There are obviously things that we could do better, we would not be effective scrutineers if we did not acknowledge this. In particular, whilst the majority of changes that followed the dissolution of the service-based committees have led to improved processes and a more targeted scrutiny function, we recognise that there is more that could be done to really

support the lead councillors and ensure that they can champion their areas – they are a key component of scrutiny in Harrow and they must be supported to function as efficiently as possible. We recognise the financial constraints on the Council but it is imperative that the Scrutiny function is adequately funded in order to be an effective part of the checks and balances on the executive.

Having said this, we feel that the challenge that we now bring to the council and our partners' performance is improving and our reputation thus has been enhanced. The challenge panel process has been a particularly effective addition to our armoury – we have been able to make timely contributions to policy proposals and service changes on a number of occasions and the efficiency of the process has again contributed to a greater credibility for our work. It is pleasing to note that the council's Corporate Strategy Board – the senior management body of the council, has commented very positively on the way scrutiny is now able to contribute to the council's processes.

For the future, we recommend that our successors continue to search for ways to improve scrutiny, to ensure that we are able to champion the needs of local people and to challenge **all** service providers locally to deliver excellent services to our residents. We would also restate the principles of good scrutiny, as encapsulated in our own strap line: scrutiny must be **independent**, it must be **member-led**, it must work to the **interest of and with local people** and it must deliver real outcomes in terms of **service improvement**. If our successors can focus on this then we are sure that they will continue, much as we have, to work across party lines with a clear focus on improving the lives of the people of the borough.



Councillor Stanley Sheinwald
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee



Councillor Mitzi Green
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny committee

STATISTICS

Committee meetings	14
Attendance by Leader	2
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	<p>Cllr Paul Osborn, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services (3)</p> <p>Cllr Susan Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety (2)</p> <p>Cllr Jean Lammiman, Portfolio (2) Holder for Community and Cultural Services</p> <p>Cllr Marilyn Ashton, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise (1)</p> <p>Cllr Christine Bednell, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (1)</p> <p>Cllr Barry Macleod-Cullinane, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing (1)</p> <p>Cllr Anjana Patel, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development (1)</p>
Attendance by Chief Executive	2

Attendance by Partners	NHS Harrow (6) NW London Hospitals NHS Trust (3) Harrow Link (2) Harrow Police Service (1) Metropolitan Police Authority Link Member (1)
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REVIEWS

Review	Type of review	Number of meetings in 2009/10	Number of visits and other review activities in 2009/10
Grants Criteria	Challenge panel	1	0
Neighbourhood Champions	Challenge panel	1	0
Response to acute paediatrics services NHS consultation	Challenge panel (with Brent Council)	1	1 visit to hospital paediatric unit
Response to East Harrow polysystem NHS consultation	Consultation response	The response was derived from a number of different meetings of the lead members and the Overview and Scrutiny committee	
Standing Review of the Budget, Phase 2	Standing Review	4	4 visits to other boroughs
Sustainability Phase 2 and 3	in-depth review	3	1 Conference 1 Workshop
Transitions Scoping workshop	This workshop enabled preparation for a project which will be scheduled for 2010/11	1	0

REPORT FROM PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

2009/10 has seen the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub Committee consolidate its experience as the engine room for scrutiny, undertaking detailed performance investigation and escalating matters for further examination by O&S.

The system of chairman's briefings has continued to drive the agenda setting process for the committee, despite a break due to staff pressures in the middle of the year. Considerations made by the chairman and vice-chairman at these meetings, where scorecards are interrogated, are reported to the sub committee to ensure transparency. Where necessary, on an exception basis, further examination has taken place in the committee setting. Where the committee has felt that further in-depth scrutiny is warranted, matters have been escalated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This year the committee has considered a range of items including progress on achieving healthy schools status, integrated budget and service planning, revenue and capital monitoring, preparations for and outcomes of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, the staff survey and the Strategy for People.¹

We escalated the issue of the housing revenue account negative subsidy to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a challenge panel was undertaken. The results of the panel formed part of the council's response to the Department for Communities and Local Government's (CLG) review of council housing finance and rents policy.

A particular area of interest has been the efforts of the Chief Executive to change the culture of the organisation. We have paid particular attention to matters such as SAP utilisation by managers and the committee supports drives to raise compliance in areas such as budget monitoring. Such improvements will ensure that the organisation develops a stronger and more accurate understanding of its financial standing. Other related areas of focus have included workforce sickness and absence, making the most of Comprehensive Area Assessment and the council's Better Deal for Residents programme.

Our focus on housing has continued, particularly with regard to the recent pressures in the area of housing responsive repairs. We considered escalating the matter to O&S for detailed investigation, but the committee subsequently felt that a larger piece of work on the Kier contract should be considered. We recommend that our successors give the Kier contract serious consideration because of the contract's impact on a wide range of services delivered to our residents.

We have also monitored progress on past reviews including delivering a strengthened voluntary sector, the review of obesity and right to manage.

¹ At the time of writing this item is scheduled for consideration on 25 March 2010.

Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

Harrow remains one of the few local authorities in the country that uses performance information to inform decisions about work programming. Many restrict interrogation of performance information to scrutiny of scorecards within the committee setting rather than integrating it into the planning of scrutiny activity. This is a key strength which must be maintained and strengthened going forward.

For the future we feel that there is potential to further improve our ways of working, in particular by engaging lead members to a greater extent in the identification of areas for monitoring and investigation, thereby forging links between consideration of policy and performance. There is also the potential to extend financial scrutiny and the consideration of financial matters alongside service performance.

We are pleased that the committee is growing in confidence in fulfilling its role and we hope that by doing so we can continue to support the council in strengthening its performance in delivering services to residents and meeting local priorities.



Councillor Mark Versallion
Chairman, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub Committee



Councillor Brian Gate
Vice-Chairman, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub Committee

Committee meetings	4
Attendance by Leader	None
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	Cllr Barry Macleod-Cullinane , Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing (1) Cllr Paul Osborn , Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services (1)
Attendance by Chief Executive	None
Review meetings	1 (HRA challenge panel)

REPORT FROM LEAD MEMBERS – ADULT HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Consideration of local health and social care issues

Over the last year, we have continued to consider a range of important health and social care issues that affect Harrow residents, some at committee-level and some in a more in-depth fashion to give them the full consideration that they warrant.

At committee we have considered for example the adults safeguarding annual report, the review of learning disabilities commissioning, adults annual complaints report, the borough's strategy and preparedness for a flu pandemic (especially pertinent given swine flu) and a particularly useful discussion on homecare in the borough. Following up on a range of concerns we held a meeting with directors from Care UK about their performance, the quality of their provision and the training/recruitment of staff.

Outside of committee we have followed up issues around reshaping children's cancer services in NW London and the NW London Commissioning Partnership (the aggregated pool of all NW London's PCT commissioning arms), the latter involving work with scrutiny councillors and NHS Chief Executives from across the NW London sector. We have also, following on from discussions at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, led in developing scrutiny's response to NHS Harrow's recent consultation on a polysystem of primary care in East Harrow. These will be particular areas that scrutiny may need to consider in the future and keep an eye on developments.

Harrow's Local Involvement Network is now establishing itself in the borough as a voice for local people through which to raise their concerns about health and social care provision. Over the past year we have agreed a protocol of working between the LINK and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Further we invited the LINK to a committee meeting to discuss their plans for public engagement and communications.

We continue to meet quarterly with the Council's Corporate Director of Adults and Housing to discuss issues around social care, focusing especially on safeguarding and self-directed support. Harrow has made great strides in progressing its personalisation agenda and is the leader in this field in London. In February, some of our officers showcased Harrow's good work on personalisation at an event run by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. We are very pleased that the strong improvements in Harrow's adult social care directorate has achieved a 3-star rating (performing well) from the Care Quality Commission. This recognises all the hard work by the Corporate Director and his team over the last year.

Reflecting on our work over the last four years, it has been particularly pleasing to see the progresses made in local social care and also participate in pan-London health scrutiny work, through the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which has allowed Harrow residents' concerns to be heard on a bigger platform across the capital.

Healthcare for London – consultation on new major trauma and stroke services (pan-London JOSC)



For the public consultation 'The shape of things to come – Developing new, high-quality major trauma and stroke services for London, Harrow scrutiny responded individually and as part of a pan-London joint overview and scrutiny committee (JOSC), of which Councillor Mithani was Harrow's representative. Following up on this, the JOSC met on a couple of occasions to consider NHS London's response to the JOSC's report and recommendations. As a result of these plans, Northwick Park Hospital now hosts one of London's eight Hyper-Acute Stroke Units, alongside a Stroke Unit and enhanced Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) services.

Integrated Care Organisation for Ealing and Harrow – Challenge Panel

In April 2009 NHS Harrow and NHS Ealing joined forces to form Ealing and Harrow Community Services – an arms length organisation established following government direction to PCTs to separate their commissioning and provider functions. Later in the year, the two PCTs and Ealing Hospital proposed the development of an Integrated Care Organisation (ICO) with effect from April 2010. Arguments for the development of an ICO suggest that it is the most viable way to deliver community care services with effective care pathways between acute services (provided by Ealing Hospital) and community care services (provided by Ealing and Harrow Community Services). As scrutiny councillors we believed that these new arrangements could have substantial impact on Harrow residents and therefore we held a challenge panel to scrutinise the proposals in more depth. The findings of the challenge panel were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January. We hope that the discussions during the challenge panel have reassured our NHS colleagues of scrutiny's commitment to work constructively with them to improve services and fully engage in order to safeguard the interests of residents in the future.

NW London Acute Services Review – joint challenge panel with Brent

Originally brought to our attention last summer, NW London Hospitals and the PCTs for Brent and Harrow reviewed emergency surgery and paediatric inpatient services for the two boroughs. The proposals to change arrangements for emergency surgery were implemented as a matter of urgency based on safety grounds.



The reconfiguration of paediatric services in Brent and Harrow was the subject of public consultation at the start of 2010. In order to scrutinise the proposals, assess the adequacy of the consultation and inform scrutiny's response to the proposals, scrutiny members from Brent and Harrow came together to hold a joint challenge panel with witnesses from the Hospital Trust, with valuable input from local stakeholders. After gathering evidence together, both boroughs developed their individual scrutiny responses to the consultation which concluded in April 2010. In our minds, this represents good cross-borough scrutiny working and an efficient and productive use of councillor and NHS time. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the consultation proposals.

Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

Looking back over the last four years we believe we have made valuable input to the direction of health and social care in the borough, to ensure that partner agencies across the borough work together to secure the best health and social care provision for the people of Harrow. For example we have seen new primary care facilities introduced to the borough, Northwick Park Hospital chosen to host a new hyper-acute stroke unit and the growth of personalisation in social care offering more clients choice and freedom over their care. We believe that scrutiny has facilitated these developments and offered a 'critical friend' challenge to plans as they were developed and implemented.

It continues to be an exciting time for health and social care with their rapid pace of change to improve services for local people. We anticipate that scrutiny will encounter many more developments in the months to come. There is a growing focus on the commissioning intentions of local health and social care organisations and we would anticipate that this will require a greater level of scrutiny in the future. In particular, the NW London Commissioning Partnership intends to translate its work on commissioning into an Integrated Strategic Plan and we anticipate further pan-London scrutiny projects in the autumn. As well as helping develop ideas, we will need to ensure that scrutiny keeps track of the implementation of past projects, for example those in Healthcare for London such as the polysystems for primary care across the borough and the new stroke services at Northwick Park Hospital.

The people of Harrow rightly expect first-class health and social care provision and we will continue to strive for this, working closely with the Harrow Local Involvement Network and other stakeholders to ensure that this is delivered.



**Policy Lead
Councillor Vina Mithani**



**Performance Lead
Councillor Rekha Shah**

REPORT FROM LEAD MEMBERS – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2009/2010 we addressed a range of important issues that effect the children and young people in Harrow and the November 2009 Overview and Scrutiny meeting was a children and young people themed meeting where a number of the key topics we considered were presented.

Reshaping of Children’s Cancer Services in North West London (NWL)

Health related issues for children and young people really came to the forefront this year. Amongst these were the plans to reshape children’s cancer services in NWL to comply with national cancer service guidance. After deliberations at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting where the proposals were presented, we decided to look further into what the proposals would mean for Harrow residents and how they would be affected by them. In collaboration with the adult health and social care lead members we held meetings with the Director of West London Cancer Network and the Chief Executive of NHS Harrow to ensure that the proposals were the best option for Harrow residents. After further evidence was presented and detailed discussions took place, we were re-assured that the proposals and the case for change would still meet the needs of Harrow residents. It will be important to keep an eye on how this work progresses in the future.

North West London (NWL) Collaborative Programme Paediatric Initiative

We considered the NWL Collaborative Programme Paediatric Initiative to improve surgical services for children and young people in hospital. The project aims to resolve the fragmentation of neonatal and specialist paediatric surgical care from critical care in NWL by April 2010.

We were happy with the proposals to make Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust in collaboration with Great Ormond Street and Guy’s and St. Thomas’ Hospital Foundation Trust the preferred provider.



The trust was also designated as the lead centre for NWL children's surgical provider network and will provide complex, in-patient neonatal and paediatric surgery for children and young people (0-18 years) residing in NWL. The progress of this work should continue to be monitored.

NW London Acute Services Review – joint challenge panel with Brent

As referenced in the report from the Adult Health and Social Care scrutiny leads, we were delighted to have been able to contribute to NHS Brent, NHS Harrow and NW London Hospitals Trust’s consultation “Better Services for Local Children – A Public Consultation for Brent and Harrow” on proposals for changes to local services for children in hospital. Our joint challenge panel with Brent scrutiny councillors was a unique way of developing our views on the proposal and we commend the process for the next Children and Young People’s leads. Our views on the proposal were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny committee in February.

Transitions Scoping Workshop

We held a scoping workshop in September to address the issue of transition from children's care to adults. The Corporate Director for Children's Services, the Children with Disabilities Service Manager, Head of Service for Young People and a number of other officers and key practitioners met with us to address some of the issues surrounding the transition service. In the workshop we addressed roles and responsibilities in children's and adult services, information sharing systems, individual budgets and personalised plans amongst other things. The disjoint between the funded management of the child and the independent individual management of adults and the difference in the whole package of care provided is something that we feel needs to be investigated.

The workshop was very useful and having the key practitioners of the service involved in the scoping and the early part of a potential review proved to be a successful way of planning and identifying the key issues for a complex subject. We hope and recommend that the outcomes of the workshop will be considered and form the basis of the scope for a more detailed piece of work in the 2010/2011 work programme.



Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

The Children's Plan set the scene for much of our work over the past few years and we have actively scrutinised the councils policies and procedure to ensure we are giving all children in Harrow the support they need to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

In particular, safeguarding and the outcomes of the Laming Review have been a prominent issue over the past year and we held key discussions with the Corporate Director to ensure that the right processes and procedures are in place in Harrow. We have also worked to ensure that our adoption procedure's are structured to try and provide a safe, secure and stable home for the children and young people in care. Ensuring that the Children's Trust arrangements are successfully in place has also been an area we have focussed on over the years. These areas will continue to important.

The light touch review of Extended Schools as community resources was an important review we carried out that addressed the development and progress of the boroughs extended schools. In line with this, we have also been happy to see the successful development of children's centres in the borough over the past few years.

The re-configuration of Harrow schools has also been an area we have also closely monitored. We will be keen to continue monitoring this development as we move towards implementation in September 2010 to ensure that the re-alignment of first and middle schools is on course to be delivered as efficiently as possible and to ensure minimal impact of the change on the children affected.

As our work throughout this year has shown, children and young people's health is becoming an increasing focus and we anticipate that scrutiny will encounter many more developments in the area of children's health over the next few years, we will be keeping a close watch on these developments and the developments in children's health service could be an area for review in 2010/2011. We also recommend a review of the Transition service in which some of the preparatory work has already been carried out.

We have been able to make a valuable contribution to the development and the delivery of services to children and young people in Harrow. We will continue to do this by following up on emerging and developing issues and also monitoring the outcomes of a number of the past reviews and issues we have considered.



Councillor Margaret Davine
Policy Lead



Councillor Janet Mote
Performance Lead

REPORT FROM LEAD MEMBERS – CORPORATE EFFECTIVENESS

We have continued to meet during 2009/10 to discuss matters relating to the corporate effectiveness of the council and we are very grateful to those officers who have attended our briefings to provide us with information. We are pleased that the Vice Chairmen of both the Overview and Scrutiny committee and the Performance and Finance sub committee now attend these briefings as observers.

People

We have continued to monitor the morale of staff within the council and the council’s capacity to deliver the kind of change necessary if we are to become one of the best council’s in London by 2012. As such we have taken particular interest in the delivery and results of the 2009 staff survey which will be used to revise the current Strategy for People. We were encouraged to hear that an interim survey had elicited a 50% response rate which demonstrated some improvements over the last survey and that officers were confident that this could be replicated in the full survey. Key issues identified in the interim survey had been leadership, managing change and developing people and significant work had been carried out to address this which will hopefully deliver improvement in the full survey. When we met with officers, the response rate to the full survey had reached 39%.

We were very interested to discuss the ‘engagement profile’ of the council which has been derived from the previous survey and we would endorse officers’ view that more resource should be focussed on ‘disenchanted’ staff rather than on staff already ‘disengaged’ from the organisation.

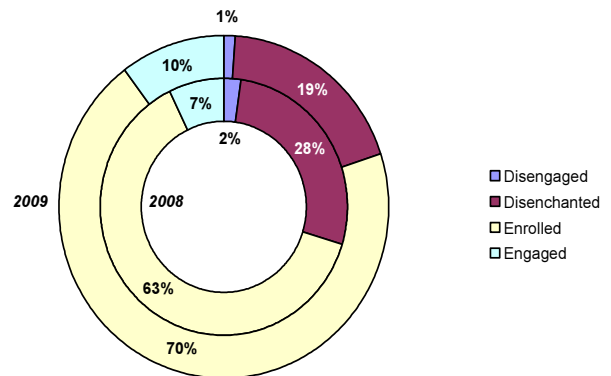
We asked that the results of the survey be presented to the Performance and Finance sub committee where we were pleased to have received very positive information regarding the improvements in the survey results.

We were also pleased to hear that sickness absence has begun to decline, this is something that we have monitored during the lifetime of this administration.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

This year saw the first results from the new public sector performance framework, Comprehensive Area Assessment. This assessment covers not only the council’s performance but also considers how effectively different bodies across the borough work together to address the priorities of the area. We received a number of briefings on the CAA and were updated on progress in terms of the submission of our own self assessments and the anticipated results. We would recommend that the results of the assessments are used to improve service performance and we would also recommend that the council investigates how we can benchmark with other authorities who have been awarded green flags for exceptional performance.

The Engagement Profile



We asked for a report on the results of the CAA and associated improvement plans to be presented to the Performance and Finance sub committee and to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in January and February.

Transformation Programme – A Better Deal for Residents

Towards the end of the year, we were advised of the efforts the council will need to make in order to address the significant fiscal difficulties it is likely to face in the coming years. We were advised that the council will not be able to address these difficulties through incremental change and a fundamental re-examination of purpose and function is absolutely critical. We were also advised that it is critical that these issues are addressed across the public sector and that we find new ways to deliver services to residents. The five streams of the 'Better Deal for Residents' programme will each focus on specific areas of improvement and we recommend both that the next corporate effectiveness lead members monitor the implementation of the plan but that also scrutiny overall ensures that this important programme delivers the improvements we need.

Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

The aspects of council performance covered by corporate effectiveness leads is extensive and we have really only been able to scratch the surface of the issues being faced by the council. We would suggest to our successors that the most significant area for their attention should be the effective delivery of the Better Deal for Residents programme as to us, this must be the delivery mechanism of the council's efficiency programme.



Policy Lead
Councillor Stanley Sheinwald



Performance Lead
Councillor Mark Versallion

REPORT FROM LEAD MEMBERS – SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

We met on a number of occasions during 2009/10 to discuss matters relating to community safety and community cohesion.

Community engagement, involvement and empowerment

We have spent some time over the past year addressing the progress and work underway in the council in respect of community engagement, consultation and empowerment. A steering group has been set up in the council to lead on this area of work and it now forms a strand of the 'better deal for residents' programme. In line with this we also considered and reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny committee details of 'the duty to involve, inform and consult' which came into force in April 2009. We addressed the implications on the council as a whole and more specifically the implications on scrutiny and how this will support us in the development of a safer and stronger community. We looked at evidence from the Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA) for good practice and learning on ways to aid community development and empowerment. We reminded Overview and Scrutiny of the HearSay Review and pointed to the recommendations which were accepted by Cabinet.

Sustainability Review

The impact of the economic downturn has had huge implications on the local community and it has been more important than ever for us to provide effective leadership with our partners and incorporate sustainability into our priorities. The sustainability review that we carried out this year aimed to address this.



The review focussed on the three strands of sustainability including economic, environmental and community.

The review was also co-chaired by Councillor Miles, Policy Lead Member for Sustainable Development and Enterprise and the overall report of the review was presented at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in February.

Community Safety

We have also met with the Crime Reduction Team Leader on a number of occasions to discuss emerging issues and developments including the recently enforced statutory powers for local authorities to scrutinise Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) to ensure their accountability. During the meetings we explored the new protocols between CDRP partners and scrutiny and the opportunity for joint work, looking at the way in which work programmes can be developed to add value to local decision-making. We raised the point that there are a number of Community Safety Strands of work and that the Council would benefit from rationalising these and showing linkages between the various agencies such as HPCCG, Safer Harrow, CDRP etc

We are keen to explore ways in which Scrutiny can discharge the role and whilst we accept that the MPA link member attending O&S might be the best way forward, we are keen to keep the matter under review so that changes are introduced if we are unable to properly discharge our duty



We have established a link with our local MPA link member, Reshard Auladin who attended our scrutiny meeting on 16 March. The MPA link member role should prove to be useful to help increase police authority involvement in scrutiny.

Gypsy and Traveller Strategy

We set out last year that we would keep a watching brief on the development of the councils Gypsy and Traveller Strategy. This is still in development and it will continue to be important to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny is closely involved as the strategy progresses. We would suggest that our interest in this subject is acknowledged with closer involvement in the development of the strategy It will also be important to ensure it refers to the guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission entitled 'Gypsies and Travellers; simple solutions for living together'.

Overview and Scrutiny

The 16 March Overview and Scrutiny meeting was a special Safer and Stronger Communities meeting where we considered the Safer Harrow Annual Strategic Assessment which provides a six-month profile of crime and safety in the borough. At this meeting we had the opportunity to have a constructive question and answer session with the Borough Commander and the Portfolio Holder for Environment Services and Community Safety, Councillor Susan Hall.

Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

In view of the fact that two of the council's corporate priorities 'deliver cleaner and safer streets' and 'build stronger communities' fall within our remit, our work as safer and stronger communities lead members has been and will continue to be of prime importance. Over the past few years we have addressed a number of issues such as Councillor Call for Action, Post Office closures and we were actively involved in the 'Delivering a strengthened voluntary and community sector for Harrow' review. We note that the implementation of some of our recommendations from this review has been difficult and we hope that the Safer and Stronger Communities scrutiny leads can be involved in the proposed review of this implementation. We expect that the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2010/2011 will continue to feature a number of issues relevant to our work in supporting a safer and stronger Harrow.



Councillor Anthony Seymour
Policy Lead



Councillor Nana Asante
Performance Lead

REPORT FROM LEAD MEMBERS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE

Consideration of local sustainable development and enterprise issues

During 2009/10 we have sought to develop a comprehensive view of what it means to achieve a sustainable Harrow. To do this we have undertaken a detailed review focusing on Harrow's environmental, economic and community sustainability. This work has been given added impetus with the onset of global recession and our concern about its impact on our locality.

Sustainability review

Our review aimed to investigate how far the council has progressed with incorporating sustainability into its objectives and priorities and the extent to which local partners are working together to achieve them. It was co-chaired by Councillor Miles and Councillor Seymour, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the subject matter.

Environmental sustainability – climate change

Harrow Council signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on climate change in 2007. The Declaration requires local authorities to address systematically the causes of climate change and to prepare their communities for its impacts. In response, the council prepared a draft Climate Change Strategy for consultation, which the review group decided to use as the focus for the environmental sustainability workstream. Our main conclusions focused on including an action plan in the strategy, strengthening the council's role in educating the local community about climate change and improving linkages with other policies and strategies.

Community sustainability – community cohesion

Our conference in July was attended by over 35 people from a range of different organisations across the borough. We are very grateful that these participants were able to give up their time to enable the review group to understand what can influence the degree of community cohesion in the area – particularly in the context of recession – and what needs to be done to improve cohesion in order to safeguard our community for the future. There is no question that the responsibility for developing a cohesive community rests with all of us, but there is also a responsibility for community leaders in setting the framework for delivery of a cohesive community. It is up to all of us, residents, community groups, organisations and the council to play our part.



Harrow's ladder of cohesion at the conference, July 2009

Economic sustainability – recession

A challenge panel was undertaken in January and formed the third element of the review. The main objective was to consider how well the council and our partners have responded to the impact of the recession on residents and to address how this additional pressure is impacting on the various organisations themselves.



Discussion underway at our conference, July 2009

Reflecting on our experience, looking to the future

Through our work as lead members we are very conscious of the cross-cutting nature of our policy area. This year, for example, we have been briefed on the recent consultations undertaken by the Mayor of London on the new London Plan, Transport Strategy and Economic Development Strategy; just one example of the need to consider Harrow's sustainability in the wider policy and geographical context. Looking forward, scrutiny will need to have particular regard to the council's role in place shaping – "the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well being of a community and its citizens"² – and the need for the council to work with others to deliver sustainable places, improve economic performance, and foster enterprise.



**Policy Lead
Councillor Jerry Miles**



**Performance Lead
Councillor Dinesh Solanki**

² Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, March 2007, p. 3. <http://www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk/> Accessed 3 February 2010.

REPORT FROM THE CALL- IN SUB 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:

- Inadequate consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders prior to the decision
- The absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision
- The decision is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the budget framework
- The action is not proportionate to the desired outcome
- A potential human rights challenge
- 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.

During 2009/10 two decisions were called in.

The decision to implement a controlled parking zone in West Harrow was called in by 150 residents on the grounds that: inadequate consultation had been undertaken with stakeholders prior to the decision; absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision; the decision was contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the budget framework; there was a potential human rights challenge. The sub committee decided that the challenge to the decision be taken no further and the decision be implemented.

The decision to implement the Learning and Development Project was called in by 150 residents on the grounds that: inadequate consultation had been undertaken with stakeholders prior to the decision; there had been insufficient consideration of legal and financial advice; there was an absence of adequate evidence on which to base a decision; the action proposed was not proportionate to the desired outcome. The sub committee decided that the challenge to the decision be taken no further and the decision be implemented.

Statistics	2009/10	2008/09
Committee meetings	2	1
Decisions called in	2	1
Call-ins from residents	2	0
Call-ins rejected	2	0
Call-ins upheld	0	1
Decisions altered following call-in	0	0



Councillor Anthony Seymour
Chairman



Councillor Mitzi Green
Vice Chairman

CONCLUSION

This is our final annual report and at the end of this administration we feel that we have developed a function which can make a significant contribution to the Council's improvement journey for the benefit of local people. Scrutiny is a challenging process, whilst we appreciate that we might not always come to the conclusions that please our colleagues, we hope that these conclusions are helpful and constructive, it is our sole purpose to work, across party lines to secure the excellent services that we believe the residents of Harrow demand.

We wish our successors the very best and hope that they find their time with scrutiny as rewarding as we have.

Harrow Council Scrutiny Councillors 2006 - 2010

APPENDIX ONE: SCRUTINY REVIEWS 2006 – 10

Review	Year
Accord MP	December 2006
Alexandra Avenue – response to PCT consultation	July 2006
Arts Culture Harrow	March 2007
Brent Birth Centre – response to NW London Hospital Trust consultation	February 2008
Carers' Case study	August 2007
Corporate Assessment – self assessment	September 2006
Council Improvement Programme	June 2008
Cultural Services	June 2007
Cultural Services – Beacon Centre case study	March 2008
Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector – interim	June 2008
Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector – final	November 2008
Economic Development and Tourism	November 2006
Education of Children Looked After	September 2006
Extended Schools as Community Resources	April 2009
Housing Revenue Account	November 2009
Integrated Care Organisation	January 2010
Obesity	November 2007
Residents Information Pack	September 2006
Response to Acute Paediatric Services NHS consultation	February 2010
Response to East Harrow polysystem NHS consultation	February 2010
Right to Manage	January 2009
School Nursing	December 2006
Scrutiny of Council Budget 2007 – 08	December 2006
Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	August 2006
Self Assessment of the Council's corporate assessment	September 2006
Standing Review of the Budget – interim	September 2008
Standing Review of the Budget – final	January 2010
Sustainability	February 2010
Water Management	August 2006