

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

27 JULY 2010

Chairman: * Councillor Jerry Miles

Councillors:

* Sue Anderson	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane
* Christine Bednell (3)	* Bill Phillips
* Kam Chana	* Sachin Shah
* Ann Gate	* Stephen Wright

Voting Co-opted:

(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
† Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	Mrs D Speel

* Denotes Member present
(3) Denote category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

16. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Paul Osborn

Reserve Member

Councillor Christine Bednell

17. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared

Agenda Item 8 – Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2009/10

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a personal interest in that he had been a Cabinet Member and the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing under the previous administration. He would remain in the room during discussion and decision making on this item.

Agenda Item 13 – Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel

Councillor Sachin Shah declared a personal interest in that he was a neighbourhood champion. He would remain in the room during discussion and decision making on this item.

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a personal interest in that he had been a Cabinet Member under the previous administration and had voted in favour of the Neighbourhood Champions Scheme. As the report only concerned procedural matters, he would remain in the room during discussion and decision making on this item but would leave should his personal interest become prejudicial.

Councillor Christine Bednell declared a personal interest in that she had been a Cabinet Member under the previous administration and had voted in favour of the Neighbourhood Champions Scheme. As the report only concerned procedural matters, she would remain in the room during discussion and decision making on this item but would leave should her personal interest become prejudicial.

18. Minutes

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:
 - the first sentence of the declaration of interest submitted by Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane be changed to read: “Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a personal interest in relation to the Neighborhood Champions Scheme in that he had been a Cabinet Member and the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing under the previous administration”;
 - the first sentence of the declaration of interest submitted by Councillor Paul Osborn be changed to read: “Councillor Paul Osborn declared a personal interest in relation to the Neighborhood Champions Scheme in that he had been a Cabinet Member and the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services under the previous administration”;
- (2) the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2010 be deferred until the next meeting.

19. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

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

20. References from Council/Cabinet

RESOLVED: To note that there were no references.

RESOLVED ITEMS

21. Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2009/10

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Adults and Housing which provided Members with a summary of the Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) Annual Report for 2009/10. The annual report summarised safeguarding activity which had been taken during 2009/10 and set out the progress that had been made against agreed priorities.

During the course of a presentation, an officer highlighted the following key points:

- significant progress had been made against national standards. In particular, the Council's training programme had been expanded, quality assurance processes had been strengthened, ratings for local care providers had improved and satisfaction amongst service users had increased;
- success had been achieved through good leadership and the development of new strategies. The Local Safeguarding Adults Board maintained a strategic overview of the service;
- the Safeguarding Adults Team had increased in size with the appointment of a new manager, two new Safeguarding Practice advisers and an assistant;
- referral numbers had increased in 2008/9 and this had continued into 2009/10. Referrals were also coming from a wider range of agencies than in previous years;
- the Council operated a robust Quality Assurance process. This included contract monitoring, internal and external audit programmes, serious case reviews and ongoing supervision and support of Care Managers and Social Workers;
- in order to raise awareness of adult safeguarding and the Council's "zero tolerance" approach, regular articles had been featured in Harrow People magazine. Work was also underway to raise awareness amongst hard to reach social groups;

- the Council was working closely with all its partners to ensure good joint working practices;
- the Council had acknowledged that good training was essential to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable adults and a free training programme had been made available to independent and voluntary sector providers. Specialist training for more experienced staff had also been made available;
- full safeguarding services were available to self-funders and those in receipt of Direct Payments and Personal Budgets;
- the Council would be working increasingly closely with self-funders and clients with personal budgets. There was also a need to refine some of the IT systems that supported the Council's safeguarding activities.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, officers clarified the following points:

- it was difficult to predict the impact of NHS cuts on the number of referrals. However, the work of the safeguarding team was funded almost entirely by the Council and, as such, cuts in the NHS were not expected to have any direct financial impact;
- the Council had not had any serious case reviews during 2009/10;
- whilst adult and child safeguarding shared similar principles, the underlying legislation varied. The Council was not required to publish the findings of serious case reviews relating to adult safeguarding, although the Council considered it good practice to do so;
- comparing Harrow's adult safeguarding data with that of other local authorities had not been possible in the past due to lack of a national data set. However 2010/2011 would be the first year of the new national data set which would enable comparisons to be made. In addition, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) regularly undertook inspections of adult social care services and Harrow's LSAB had benchmarked local performance against the best of the inspections;
- if concerned with the performance or number of referrals originating from a care home, the adult safeguarding team would undertake unannounced inspections to ascertain whether a problem existed;
- the Council's contract team monitored all care contracts whilst CQC undertook regular inspections of care homes. It was acknowledged that service users were not always able to report concerns themselves;
- when considering the data contained in the annual report, it was important to realise that not every referral represented a case of abuse, although all referrals were treated seriously. In many instances, the

adult safeguarding team would investigate a concern and discover that no further action was required;

- the Council was very close to achieving full compliance with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services Standards for Safeguarding Adults, with only one area requiring additional work;
- the adult safeguarding team was trained to identify signs of 'carer burnout'. However, whilst the wellbeing of carers was very important, research had indicated that carer stress alone was not likely to lead to abuse;
- due to the way in which data was currently collected, it was not possible to see whether there had been an increase in financial abuse in recent years. However, new laws would soon require local authorities to capture more information which would allow a better and more in-depth analysis of such concerns.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the work that has taken place in 2009/10 be noted;
- (2) the action plan for 2010/11 be noted;
- (3) that Members be provided with comparative data from previous years.

22. Harrow Strategic Partnership Annual Report

The Committee received the Harrow Strategic Partnership Annual Report 2009/10 which set out the work, achievements and ambitions of the Partnership. Officers stated that a number of changes had taken place since the report had been written, including the abolishment of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, the publication of the Health White Paper and changes to Local Area Agreement (LAA) reward payments. The Council was expecting further policy changes in the near future and this made it difficult to decide when to progress certain projects.

Following questions from Members, officers clarified the following points:

- in line with the decision of the Partnership taken in 2005, 50% of the LAA reward grant had been made available to the 5 management groups who had been tasked with sharing the money with the organisations that had helped achieve the reward grant target. The business cases of the management groups had been approved at the meeting of the Harrow Partnership Board on 22 July 2010;
- the Council was in the process of drafting a response to the Ministry of Justice in relation to the consultation on the proposed closure of Harrow Magistrates' Court. The Council strongly opposed the proposals outlined in the consultation document;

- the Council was continuing to explore the possibility of closer partnership working through the use of shared services;
- the Council was working jointly with health organisations to identify better reablement services, which would help residents avoid hospital and therefore reduce the strain on NHS resources. Research also indicated that individuals preferred being treated in their own homes;
- LAA reward money was being used to support the Better Deal for Residents Programme;
- the Annual Report was intended to provide readers with an overview of the work of the Harrow Strategic Partnership. Officers could provide Members with additional data and information if required;
- some of the baseline data was based on assumptions although some had been drawn from previous Place Surveys;
- the Council had a good relationship with NHS Harrow who had engaged well with the Partnership.

A Member of the Committee stated that it would be useful for the Committee to organise a Challenge Panel to consider the impact of the closure of Harrow Magistrates' Court on residents, the Council and the Council's partners.

Some Members of the Committee raised concern that the report did not provide sufficient baseline data and that it was therefore difficult to determine whether the partnership was producing tangible benefits.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

23. Scrutiny Work Programme

The Committee received a report which set out proposals for the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2010/11. An officer stated that it was important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee concentrated on areas of scrutiny that could create tangible benefits. She added that given the unpredictable environment in which the Council was operating, the Work Programme would need a degree of flexibility.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Better Deal for Residents Programme be used as a 'filter' when adding to the work programme, with related projects given priority;
- (2) the Executive be invited to suggest areas that it wished the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider;
- (3) the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget be reinstated with a view to monitoring saving proposals;

- (4) a Standing Review of the Better Deal for Residents Programme be established to ensure that the Committee maintained a general oversight of the programme and related projects;
- (5) Challenge Panels be organised to consider the following:
 - Closure of Harrow's Magistrates' Court;
 - Council's IT Strategy;
 - Council's Single Equalities Scheme;
 - Harrow Association of Voluntary Services;
 - Housing Ambition Plan.
- (6) the Committee receive a report detailing the work that had been undertaken by Capita as part of the wider Business Transformation Programme;
- (7) the Health Sub-Committee take responsibility for monitoring NHS finances.

24. Pool of Advisers

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance which set out details of a pool of advisers. An officer explained that during the previous administration the Committee had established a pool of advisers to support and strengthen its work. In response to developments in the Council's community engagement strategy, the pool would be managed jointly by the Council's scrutiny team and the policy officer for community engagement.

Following questions from Members, an officer clarified the following points:

- the scrutiny team had recently completed a role profile for those serving as advisers and would circulate the document to Members of the Committee;
- it was not intended that the pool of advisers would be used for consultation purposes. Instead, advisers would be able to inform the work of the Committee through the provision of advice;
- the pool of advisers included a wide range of individuals from different sections of the community. The Committee could select the most relevant advisers depending on the nature of the work being undertaken.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the work of the pool of advisers be endorsed;

- (2) the role profile for members of the pool be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

25. Scrutiny Member Induction / Development Programme 2010/11 - Progress Report

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance which outlined the progress that had been made in developing and implementing a training and development programme for Scrutiny Members. An officer outlined upcoming training, as detailed in the report, and invited comments from Members.

A Member stated that it would be sensible to bring forward financial training to ensure Scrutiny Members were able to properly consider the budget. In addition, he enquired if Members would be asked to complete a skills audit to help determine the type of training that would be most beneficial.

An officer stated that a skills audit was due to be carried out shortly. Consideration would also be given to moving certain training events to reflect the immediate needs of Members.

A Member stated that many of the training events that had been held since the elections in May 2010 had clashed with other events and Committee meetings. He requested that care be taken to avoid schedule conflicts in the future.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) subject to Member comments, the Committee agree the action being proposed in the report;
- (2) the committee receive further reports on proposals for the Scrutiny Member Development Programme;
- (3) Members be provided with details of the Scrutiny training events that they had already attended.

26. Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel

The Committee received a report which outlined the findings of the Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel that had taken place in February 2010.

An officer explained that the report of the Challenge Panel had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2010 and that Members had felt that the report did not reflect the overall views of the Panel. As a result, the Committee had requested that the Challenge Panel be reconvened to confirm its findings and that the report be resubmitted to the Committee at a later date. The officer explained that it had not been possible to reconvene the Challenge Panel. In light of the change of

administration and the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Committee were asked to decide what it wished to do with the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the content of the Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel report be noted;
- (2) the Neighbourhood Champions Challenge Panel report be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

27. Report from the Chair of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee stated that the Sub-Committee wanted to ensure that the topics it considered benefited the wider work of the Council. She added that she was due to meet with the Vice-Chairman in August to consider the future direction of the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

28. Minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 19 July 2010

RESOLVED: That the actions arising from the minutes of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 19 July 2010 be noted and, insofar as necessary, agreed.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.51 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chairman