

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
AND SCRUTINY SUB-  
COMMITTEES**

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**Date of Meeting:** 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010

**Subject:** Report from the Scrutiny Lead Members

**Responsible Officer:** Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance

**Scrutiny Member area:** **Lead** Cllr Jerry Miles and Cllr Tony Ferrari, Corporate Effectiveness;  
Cllr Chris Mote and Cllr Nana Asante, Safer and Stronger Communities;  
Cllr Stanley Sheinwald and Cllr Susan Anderson, Sustainable Development and Enterprise

**Exempt:** No

**Enclosures:** Reports from the lead members

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report provides information on the issues discussed in and recommendations from the scrutiny lead member briefings for:

- Corporate Effectiveness
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Sustainable Development and Enterprise

**Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny committee members are asked to:

- I. Note the discussions held by the lead members
- II. Agree relevant action proposed therein

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

This report summarises discussions which have taken place between the scrutiny policy and performance lead members and relevant officers. These discussions are reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in order that the committee is fully appraised of issues of interest to scrutiny across the authority and amongst partners and also to ensure that any action proposed by the lead members can be authorised by the committee.

This report includes reports from:

- Corporate Effectiveness
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Sustainable Development and Enterprise

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **Performance Issues**

There are no performance issues associated with this report. However, a decision to escalate any issue raised during a briefing with the lead members to the Overview and Scrutiny committee for further investigation will be accompanied by an analysis of the relevant performance issues.

### **Environmental Impact**

There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

### **Risk Management Implications**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

### **Equalities implications**

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? Yes ( ) No (  )

If no, state why an EqIA was not carried out below:

No equalities impact has been undertaken as a consequence of this report as no specific action or service development is proposed.

### **Corporate Priorities**

Please identify which corporate priority the report incorporates and how:

- **Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe**
- **United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads**

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Not required for this report.

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny 020 8420 9387

**Background Papers:** None

## **SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT:** **CORPORATE EFFECTIVENESS**

**Lead Members:** Councillors Jerry Miles and Tony Ferrari

The lead members met on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2010.

### **Attendees**

- Councillor Jerry Miles, Scrutiny Policy Lead Member
- Councillor Tony Ferrari, Scrutiny Performance Lead Member
- Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

### **Attendance by Corporate Directors**

The Lead Members agreed to hold their next meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December from 6 – 7 with Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive. The Corporate Director of Finance would be invited to the January meeting (26<sup>th</sup> January) to provide more detailed information on the implications of CSR – changes to funding formula etc. She would also be asked to provide information for the 15<sup>th</sup> December meeting with regard to the delivery of the 2010/11 savings proposals – quarter two outturn with an indication of progress during quarter three and any update on the implications of CSR.

For action

- Financial information with regard to the delivery of savings plan 2010/11 to be provided to the December meeting of the leads. Any additional intelligence re the implications of CSR to also be provided
- Further information with regard to the implication of CSR to be discussed with Corporate Director of Finance at January meeting of leads

### **Debt Recovery Policy**

Work to identify the impact on residents of the Council's debt recovery and comparisons with other boroughs continues. A number of the 'high' performing councils have been contacted and information is awaited. Lead members are keen to understand how it might be possible to identify where the council is operating the policy insensitively and placing unnecessary pressure on residents. There is a standard policy and it will be difficult to identify cases where discretion might have been used. In order to further consider the issue, information will be sought from the sample of boroughs regarding:

- collection rate
- number of households
- number of summons issued
- Number of bailiffs orders made

Complaints data with regard to the Council's Council Tax debt recovery policy will also be sought

### **For action**

The Lead Members will continue to investigate this issue

**HR Issues**

In addition to the standard work force report, the lead members will seek further information from the Assistant Chief Executive with regard to:

- Voluntary severance scheme – figures, delivery of savings anticipated, impact on the organisation, delivery as capital or revenue
- Implementation of mobile and flexible working scheme

**For action**

These items to be scheduled for discussion at the 16<sup>th</sup> December meeting of the Corporate Effectiveness leads

**Additional Areas of Interest**

The lead members will receive additional information with regard to:

- Place-based budgeting
- Shared services.

**Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Corporate Effectiveness Lead Scrutiny Councillors will take place on: 15<sup>th</sup> December from 6 – 7 pm

**SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT:**  
**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

**Lead Members:** Councillors Nana Asante and Chris Mote

The lead members met on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

**Attendees**

- Councillor Chris Mote, Scrutiny Policy Lead Member
- Councillor Nana Asante, Scrutiny Performance Lead Member
- Commander Dalwardin Babu, Borough Commander, Harrow Metropolitan Police Service
- Patrick Murphy, GIS Performance & Research Manager
- Cllr Paul Osborn, Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee – second item only
- Marianne Locke, Divisional Director, Community & Culture – second item only
- Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

**Policing**

The Borough Commander was pleased to have this opportunity to brief scrutiny councillors on the current challenges for policing in the borough. He had already spoken to the Leader of the Council, Environment and Community Safety Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Opposition. He confirmed that he is completely committed to the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) and neighbourhood policing which links an identified team of officers with a geographical area. However, the SNTs must now operate within the constraints of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), and, whilst the specific detail of the impact of CSR is still uncertain, it is likely to mean an overall 20% reduction in budget. The Borough Commander pointed out that since his tenure of office began in Harrow, he has in fact reduced budget by 5% per annum and he is therefore confident that he will be able to meet the reductions with minimal impact on service delivery. He outlined his proposal to meet the reduction which he intends to deliver in full consultation with the council and, ward panel chairs and with the Police and Community Consultative Group.

It is the Borough Commander's intention to maintain numbers of officers in the SNTs but to deploy them more flexibly. At present, each team comprises one sergeant, two police constables and three police community support officers. This allocation makes no allowance for the different experience of crime between the wards. In future a more flexible approach is proposed which could see resources moved to where there is specific need. Thus whilst there will be a permanent SNT footprint in each ward, in future, problem solving and tasking capability will also be established from existing resources to be deployed where required. A Community Board, comprising chairs of ward panels, police and council officers will receive information from the Joint Agency Tasking and Co-ordinating Group and will make decisions with regard to the deployment of police resources. Full discussion on the proposal has been scheduled for the Police and Community Consultative Group on 15<sup>th</sup> November. The Borough Commander hoped that the scheme will enable the Safer Neighbourhood Teams to become more sustainable and retain the important connection to the ward councillors in the difficult financial circumstances being faced. He also hopes that the arrangements will mean

that, in the face of a recruitment freeze, he would be able to offer some opportunities for advancement to PCSOs, who have joined in an attempt to become police officers.

The Safer and Stronger Communities lead councillors were pleased to hear that the SNTs would be retained, though they pointed out that there would inevitably be dissatisfaction in some areas as officers are deployed more flexibly. As such it would be helpful if a joint cross-party statement could be made supporting the deployment. It would also be helpful if the ward panel chairs are also able to support the proposal and promote it amongst their communities – it is important that the reality of the situation is made clear to residents. Cllr Mote suggested that, in the face of criticism about lack of visibility of police officers, which may well increase in the context of these proposals, opportunities to explain the work of the police at ‘open days’ as have been held in Pinner may be helpful. For example, officers were able to reassure residents that, having considered the data regarding criminal activity, officers were deployed at night or in plain clothes and thus, though less visible were continuing to target priority crime in the area.

Cllr Asante enquired as to the impact of proposals regarding a Crime and Policing Commissioner. The Borough Commander clarified that the commissioners were likely to cover police force areas and not boroughs and that therefore the potential impact in London boroughs is less clear.

The Borough Commander also emphasised the need for a joint approach to problem solving with both the Council and other agencies such as probation. He cited work with schools and place of safety orders and also prominent offenders in this context.

The GIS Performance & Research Manager introduced some of the statistical information which informs the local approach to policing. He emphasised the priority being given by local residents to addressing crime, even though the borough has a low level of crime. This data also emphasises the need for greater co-operation between partners in addressing crime – e.g. environmental projects for offenders, activities for young people.

Cllr Asante queried how police communicated with residents as there appears to be a problem with the way some officers relate to the community. The Borough Commander recognised that for some officers the change in working practice could mean that they need some support to communicate effectively. Training has been run in the past but in the context of the advice from councillors, the Borough Commander felt it might be appropriate to run this training again.

#### **For action**

The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Lead Councillors recommend that the strategic assessment be considered at a future briefing

#### **HAVS**

Cllr Paul Osborn and the Divisional Director, Community & Culture joined the meeting for this item.

The Overview and Scrutiny committee in October had been advised that HAVS was continuing to operate despite the council having suspended all payments to the organisation. The committee had asked the Safer and Stronger Communities leads to investigate this further to ensure that no monies were being released from the Council.

The Divisional Director, Community & Culture advised councillors that no council funds have been released to HAVS since May 2010. She advised the following:

- The first quarter of the voluntary and community sector grant of £94k has been released but nothing further
- None of the £10k in respect of contribution towards a funding officer has been released
- None of the £9k contribution from Children's Services in respect of an independent visitors post has been released
- No invoices have been presented to Children's Services in respect of extended schools work
- No monies have been paid by Adults and Housing Services
- No Local Area Agreement funding has been paid since May 2010
- Any work being undertaken by HAVS was therefore being funded from reserves.
- A finance and an audit committee are now in place and these committees are meeting weekly. As a result, financial management appears to be improving
- Independent people are being appointed to undertake an independent review of funding.
- An interim Chief Executive has also been appointed on a 2-day per week basis, no permanent appointment will be made until the financial investigations are completed.
- HAVS has received HR advice from the Council regarding staffing issues.

Cllr Osborn enquired as to whether there had been any impact on funding applications from HAVS as a result of what has gone on. The Divisional Director clarified that the role of the Funding Officer was to support applications from other organisations and not HAVS.

It is hoped that it might also be possible to identify any improvement required in the council's processes, in particular, the impact of historic funding arrangements. The Divisional Director agreed that the Council must consider the effectiveness of its monitoring processes.

The independence of HAVS, recognition of the Council's contractual obligations to the organisation and its funding relationship with other bodies was acknowledged – failure to safeguard this could result in a breach of the Compact. It was agreed that, until the findings of the independent financial review has confirmed that there has been no financial malpractice, HAVS will not receive any further funding and that this will be made clear to them. The gateway review will determine whether further funding can be released.

The group agreed that for the future, the Council will need to determine what it will be willing to fund in terms of an umbrella organisation and that HAVS will also need to determine its own direction – in consultation with the sector itself. The extent that these coincide will determine the future funding relationship.



The Council will also need to determine how it will fund HAVS and other organisations in future – a focus on outcomes and SLAs may be an option, though this will also need to accommodate member involvement in the process.

It is hoped that any changes can be implemented in the 12/13 grant round but that principles can be identified and published for consultation prior to this.

**For action**

The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Lead Councillors will seek further updates on this issue. In addition, the Safer and Stronger Communities Performance Lead is chairing a challenge panel on the implications of events at HAVS on the relationship between the council and the sector.

**Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Lead Scrutiny Councillors will take place on:

7<sup>th</sup> December from 9.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.

## **SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT:** **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE**

Lead Members: Councillors Sue Anderson and Stanley Sheinwald

### **BRIEFING – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Lead Members met on 6 October 2010.

#### **Attendees**

Councillor Sue Anderson, Scrutiny Lead Member

Councillor Stanley Sheinwald, Scrutiny Lead Member

Councillor Keith Ferry, Portfolio Holder, Planning Development and Enterprise

Mark Billington, Interim Head of Economic Development

Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer

#### **Economic development strategy – Enterprising Harrow Council 2007-16**

The Interim Head of Economic Development introduced the new action plan. The themes identified within the strategy are still relevant but the supporting action plan has been redeveloped for the period 2010-2013.

It is a partnership strategy rather than a council strategy and therefore success is dependent on working with partners, for example working with colleges. The action plan has been developed through a consultation process with partners.

Members then discussed specific aspects of the action plan.

#### **Employment support**

In response to a question regarding the future of employment support, the Interim Head of Economic Development confirmed that sources of funding such as the Future Jobs Fund are coming to an end.

In future the need would be for Harrow to influence main contractors who would be delivering the 'Work Programme'. This is the Government's Welfare to Work programme which will replace New Deal and Pathways to Work. This was a change in approach from the past, where bids would be made for funds to deliver projects in the locality.

In future the need would be for Harrow to influence main contractors who would be delivering employment support across London. This was a change in approach from the past, where bids would be made for funds to deliver projects in the locality.

Should these main contractors choose to subcontract delivery of employment support, there was also an opportunity for Harrow in terms of bringing in local organisations to help to deliver these services to residents. This could also help to overcome the fact that on paper Harrow has fewer unemployed residents than other parts of London and thereby encourage contractors to provide services in Harrow.

There are also opportunities to influence the development of tenders, for example in highlighting the needs of specific groups. A tender is currently

being developed by the London Development Agency (LDA) for the whole of London for support to young people who are not in education or training (NEET). The Council already offers support to young people up to the age of 21 who are leaving care; therefore there is an opportunity to also offer support to this group in accessing employment.

The outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review will help to give a clearer idea of future direction.

### Research

The Interim Head of Economic Development referred to the contact he has been able to establish with the Bank of England agent for the area. This was a useful connection in that the Council could offer information such as local footfall and proportion of empty properties while the agent has connections with a range of local businesses. It was agreed that the scrutiny Lead Members be provided with details of the briefings.

### Monitoring of progress against the action plan

In response to a question it was clarified that progress against the action plan is reported to the Council's improvement boards. The main performance indicator used in measuring performance is NI 152:

*By Q2 May 2011 extend the lead over the England average rate to at least 2.5%*

In Quarter 2 2007, the baseline was 2.1%. The last known data is for quarter 2, 2009, when the gap was 2.6%. The indicator covers a wide range of activities covered by the plan that are designed to impact on employment levels.

### Business directory

In response to a question about measuring the effectiveness of the directory, the Interim Head of Economic Development said that Council spend on local businesses was a useful measure. Last year the Council spent £7.2m (3%) on local businesses. An evaluation questionnaire could also be sent to businesses in the directory.

Members were encouraged to draw independent traders' attention to the directory through their role as ward Councillors.

### Other areas

Other areas discussed included:

- The need to promote Harrow as a place for businesses to locate – for example through events such as Gateway Asia and Place West London.
- Tourism – there are no plans to recruit an officer.
- The procurement process – making it more accessible to local businesses (in Harrow or the sub-region) that were likely to employ local people.
- The planning process – making it attractive to developers.
- The importance of maintaining the viability of shopping centres
- The role of scrutiny – for example in identifying activity that the Council could stop doing.

### **Local Economic Assessment (LEA)**

The LEA guidance and monitoring has recently been withdrawn, but the decision has been taken to continue because it is important to the Council for planning purposes.

It has identified a potential skills gap; if growth comes there will be a need for high level skills. The Portfolio Holder commented that there was a focus on better times ahead; large employers had advised that there were local skills shortages and as such there is a need to re-equip local people in anticipation of future growth. There are also positive developments in that Kodak, for example, has begun to re-engage apprentices.

Another area of importance for the borough is access to jobs outside Harrow. It was noted that after Harrow the next largest group of residents work in Southwark, highlighting the role of good transport links. It was noted that the average salary is higher in Harrow and that this was driven by the number of residents working outside the borough where salaries are higher.

The LEA is at the consultation stage. The final version will be published in January/February 2011.

#### **FOR ACTION:**

- The Lead Members have requested a further briefing in six months' time.
- The Leads requested that they be added to the distribution list for the newsletter to businesses and that they also receive briefings from the Bank of England agent.