

APPENDIX A

Scrutiny Annual Report – 2010/11

Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee

Our sub-committee

The Performance and Finance scrutiny sub-committee looks in detail at how the council's services are performing. The sub-committee undertakes detailed in-year performance investigation, escalating matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where necessary.

The sub-committee:

- monitors service and financial performance by analysing data and challenging officers and executive members;
- considers policy implications for performance and the potential for improvement;
- makes relevant recommendations for improvement and/or referrals to the Overview and Scrutiny committee if further work is needed;.

Our meetings

The agenda for our quarterly meetings have been driven by our regular Chair and Vice-Chairman's meetings. By interrogating the Council's quarterly scorecards we have requested a range of reports for discussion at the sub-committee, with a view to ensuring that sufficient action is being taken to address areas for improvement. Our main areas of focus in 2010/11 are detailed below:

- **Children's social care** – a particular concern has been social case assessments. As a result of poor and declining performance in quarter one, we invited the Corporate Director to attend the sub-committee to explain the problems and the steps she was taking to remedy matters. We remain concerned about the council's performance in this critical area and will continue to monitor matters into 2011/12.
- **Narrowing the gap** – we were pleased to note the success of the Narrowing the Gap projects. The authority faces a number of challenges in encouraging schools to contribute financially to supporting such projects, despite the benefits that are achieved for the children, their families and the wider community.
- **Housing Ambition Plan** – along with our predecessor sub-committee Members, we have been concerned about the performance of major and responsive repairs in housing. Additionally, the Divisional Director of Housing asked scrutiny to consider Harrow's approach to resident engagement. After investigating, we are pleased to note that progress is being made, especially in resident satisfaction, but we will continue to monitor performance as the plan progresses.
- **Budget holder forecasting compliance** – the sub-committee has expressed concern regarding compliance by budget holders and has requested details of the size of affected budgets. At the time of writing, this remains an area of significant concern which we will continue to pursue in 2011/12.

- **Payment to suppliers with 30 days** – the sub-committee has sought clarification on performance in this area and has been briefed on actions taken to address the delays. At the time of writing, the sub-committee is seeking further clarification and will continue to monitor progress in 2011/12.
- **Revenue and capital monitoring** – the sub-committee has received the revenue and capital monitoring reports that go to Cabinet, with a view to better linking financial data with service performance. Additionally, the sub-committee has considered the Council's approach to addressing future funding gaps. The challenging financial climate necessitates the sub-committee continuing to evaluate the council's response to these pressures.
- **Measuring value for money** – the Chair and Vice-Chair have received presentations on the Local Area Performance Solution (LAPS) which enables Harrow's services to be compared with other London boroughs' performance and financial information across a range of services.¹ With the abolition of both the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Audit Commission, we will continue to monitor policy developments with a view to how the Council might effectively benchmark its performance with its comparators.
- **Project activity** – The Chair has been an active member of the scrutiny review group looking into the council's use of performance information, thereby maintaining the link with the sub-committee.
- **Past reviews** – we have also monitored progress on past reviews including the voluntary sector review (2008/09), the sustainability review (2009/10) and the standing review of the budget (2009/10).

Our conclusions and next steps

This has been a busy year for the sub-committee. As the administration progresses, we will continue to review in-year performance, acting as a critical friend where necessary, and plan to further integrate the consideration of financial and service performance in supporting service improvements for Harrow's residents.



Councillor Sue Anderson
Chair, Performance and Finance
Scrutiny Sub-Committee



Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane
Vice-Chairman, Performance and
Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

¹ Local Authority Performance Solution (LAPS), led by Capital Ambition and the London borough of Lewisham, is a project to share, compare and analyse local performance data collected by London boroughs to improve services.

Committee meetings	4
Attendance by Portfolio Holders	Cllr Graham Henson , Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services (1)

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