

# **SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

**2010/11**

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## **CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD**

This is the first year of a new administration locally and a new government nationally. Both have created an interesting environment within which Harrow's scrutiny function operates. The new national government has made considerable changes: major upheaval has been driven through the performance management process including the end of the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Audit Commission and massive changes to how public sector services are delivered are proposed – the Localism Bill, the Health White Paper and the Police White paper all propose a shift from national direction to local empowerment. The government has announced the advent of the Big Society with its emphasis on empowering communities, redistributing power and fostering a culture of volunteerism and all of this has been set against a significant public sector deficit and the Government's commitment to reduce this as quickly as possible.

Locally, the elections in May 2010 saw a change in the political control of the council, from Conservative to Labour. One of the cornerstones of the new local administrations ambitions is the need for the council to 'listen and lead'. It is central to its success that it is able to foster a new relationship with local people. Nowhere is this more important than in the delivery of the 'Better Deal for Residents'. It is anticipated that, through the delivery of this huge transformation programme the council will be able to find the level of savings required to fund Harrow's contribution to the reduction in the public sector deficit. Whereas in the past it has been possible to deliver savings by percentage reductions in individual budgets, the extent of the savings now required mean that the council and the public sector locally must consider transformational change in how it delivers services and its relationship with local people.

This creates both challenges and opportunities for the scrutiny function. We have this year become much more responsive to the changing economic environment and have made a commitment to focus our deliberations on those areas of council and partner performance which are the highest priority. We have also recognised the need to become much more closely engaged with residents - the fundamental purpose of scrutiny is to secure effective service delivery for local people by holding service providers to account. At a time of such significant change, the views of our residents become even more important. With this in mind we have embarked on an ambitious engagement programme, which is considered in more detail in the report from the Overview and Scrutiny committee. We have re-launched our pool of advisors and a number of our projects this year have benefited from the expert opinion of our residents. We should like to put on record our gratitude to them for giving up their time and energy to support the improvement of services across the borough.

The new administration re-established the health scrutiny sub committee as it was felt that the weight of change proposed by Central Government meant that a committee with a specific brief in this area would be the most effective scrutiny structure. However, this committee has decided to consider not just the impact of changes in health but also the health impact of developments in other service areas for example, the impact of poor housing on the health of residents. It also agreed that the original terms of reference for the newly established committee were too narrow and as such, these were expanded to include social care.

The current structure thus comprises, the Overview and Scrutiny committee, the Performance and Finance sub committee and the Health and Social Care sub committee. Reports from each follow in this report.

We are pleased that the scrutiny Leadership Group is now the driving force behind the scrutiny function. This group comprises the chairs and vice chairs of each committee and the policy and performance scrutiny lead councillors. This group meets on a monthly basis to consider the strategic direction of the scrutiny function, discuss the development of the work programme and issues emerging from the leads discussions and plan the agendas for the individual committees. This has made a significant contribution to our effectiveness and we would like to thank the leads for their continuing efforts. Reports from each set of leads is included below. We now feel that the structure introduced under the previous administration is beginning to make a real contribution to the improvement of services locally.

There are significant challenges for us ahead and also significant opportunities. Whilst resources are continuing to reduce, we must ensure our focus continues to be on what matters most to the authority and to local people and we must ensure that we allow the voice local people to resound through our investigations and ensure that the council makes the right decisions for the future.



**Cllr Jerry Miles**  
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Cllr Paul Osborn**  
Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

# **REPORT FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **Our committee**

The Overview and Scrutiny committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis to consider and bring challenge to the Council's policy direction. Since the local elections in May 2010 the size of the committee has been reduced and it now comprises 5 Labour councillors and 4 Conservative councillors. Whilst as chair and vice chair, we have long standing experience of the scrutiny function, we were joined this year by some new faces to the council. We would like to thank these new members for the contribution they have made to our deliberations and look forward to working with them throughout this administration. The committee has met 15 times since the election and has commissioned a range of investigations of the council's performance, these are outlined below.

## **Our meetings**

The new scrutiny committee has maintained the tradition of meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for two special meeting of the committee. The Leader and Chief Executive attended the committee in July, shortly following the change in administration to discuss the future direction of the Council, given the change in Leadership.

The Leader and the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance also attended the committee in January this year to discuss the Council's budget, a particularly important meeting in the context of the extremely difficult financial situation the Council, like other authorities and public partners, finds itself in. This meeting was held the day before Cabinet agreed its budget papers and, in a departure from previous practice, in order that scrutiny's comments could help the budget setting process, the Leader agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the committee would attend to make a statement to Cabinet on their findings. This statement was well received and we think this approach emphasises the committee's intention to be more responsive in difficult times.

The Leader also attended a further meeting with the committee in February, to discuss the council's corporate priorities and its corporate plan and we are grateful to him for giving up this additional time.

In addition to general business items, other meetings of the committee have considered the following substantive issues:

- Safeguarding Adults annual report
- Harrow Strategic Partnership annual report
- Children's and Adult's complaints performance
- Performance management in Harrow
- The performance of the Business Transformation Partnership
- Implications of the Public Spending Review
- Implications of the Government's changes to the performance management framework
- The Council's core strategy
- The Council's Single Equalities Scheme
- The Sport and Leisure contract
- The Transport Local Implementation Plan
- The Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan
- Development Management Policies
- Planning enforcement
- Issues at Harrow Association for Voluntary Service

## **Meeting with the Portfolio Holders**

As in the previous administrations, we were able to discuss a number of key issues with our Portfolio Holders and we thank them for giving us their views and being so frank with us at such an early stage in the administration. The following have been considered with the portfolio holders:

- Safeguarding Adults annual report
- Performance Management in Harrow
- Issues at Harrow Association for Voluntary Service
- Sport and Leisure contract
- The Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan
- Development Management Policies
- Planning enforcement
- Sport and Leisure contract

## **Working with Residents**

In addition to these items, the committee has agreed to take a more proactive role in the development of our relationship with residents. In particular the committee agreed to re-launch the 'Pool of Advisors' which had been established under the previous administration. We were delighted that this re-launch attracted a number of new residents, keen to work with scrutiny to secure improvements in the Council's performance and ensure that the view of our citizens is heard during this extremely difficult time for the Council. As a result of the re-launch all of our projects have included residents as full members of the project groups and they have brought a unique and challenging perspective to our deliberation for which we are grateful.

Whilst this has been a welcome improvement in our performance, there is still more that scrutiny can do to improve how we engage with local people. The scrutiny Leadership Group has considered this in detail and has agreed that during the next 12 months the committee will attempt to increase its engagement with local people, but not in the traditional ways that it has in the past. The use of social networking sites has increased massively in the last few years and the committee is keen to investigate whether or not use of these media will enable us to engage more effectively and extensively. This is not to say that the 'old ways' of investigating residents' views will be disposed of but it does mean we want to increase our engagement 'tool box'. We intend to investigate the opportunities presented to us via the new media this during the second phase of the performance management review and look forward to entering the virtual engagement world with our residents on a regular basis.

## **Review Programme**

The Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned a number of projects during the year. However, in a departure from previous years, we did not commission an annual work programme reflecting the need for a more responsive, dynamic process for our investigations. As such we identified a range of projects which we would consider and reviewed this on a regular basis. We also agreed in a number of cases to consider issues of concern first at the relevant committee before deciding whether or not to investigate via formal review – both the HAVS investigation and the Performance Review started out this way and proposals to consider the Housing Ambition Plan and Capita overspend were each 'downgraded' to committee items in the same way. We feel this is a more effective way to work, making the best use of the Scrutiny Lead Members time, the committee's time and maximising the impact of our more detailed investigative processes. Nonetheless, the committee has completed a number of projects this year:

- **Closure of Harrow Magistrates Court challenge panel**

With the announcement of the closure of the local magistrates' court, scrutiny councillors investigated the impact of this closure on local residents and on the public sector partners who are affected by the closure. The closure, designed to save resources for Her Majesty's Court Service, would effectively shift costs from HMCS to the local authority, police and probation and would result in additional difficulties for residents. The report was submitted to Ministry of Justice as the Council's response to the proposals. Unfortunately, the Government is pressing ahead with the proposals and the magistrates' court is expected to close in the summer.

- **Standing review of the Better Deal for Residents programme**

In order to deliver the level of savings now required of the Council, the Better Deal for Residents was introduced following the elections. Whilst in the past it has been possible to make savings by reducing individual budgets by a percentage amount, the extent of savings now required mean this approach is no longer viable. This standing review has been set up to oversee the impact of the Better Deal for Residents programme on local people, staff and partners and to consider how far it is delivering the outcomes envisaged. The review's interim report, which considers the council's project management process will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June.

- **Performance Management review – Phase One**

This review is in two phases, the second of which will take place during the summer. The first phase of the review has considered the opportunities offered by the relaxation of the national performance management framework. The report was welcomed by Cabinet and will make a significant contribution to the organisation's approach to performance management in the post Audit Commission/Comprehensive Area Assessment era.

- **Harrow Association for Voluntary Service challenge panel**

During the year a number of issues regarding financial irregularities came to light with regard to Harrow Association of Voluntary Service. Whilst these generally related to the behaviour of a number of individuals, the committee wished to reassure itself that there were no more fundamental weaknesses in our systems that would have implications for our future relationship with the sector. At the time of writing, the challenge panel is considering its findings and will report to the Overview and Scrutiny committee in June.

In the coming months, we propose to commission a number of other projects:

- Continuation of the standing review of the Better Deal for Residents
- Phase Two of the Performance Management review
- Standing review of the budget
- Snow Clearance
- Engaging with Young People

Two further issues are currently scheduled to be considered by committee and these may well be escalated to become more detailed investigations:

- Disabled access
- Health and housing

## **Our conclusions and next steps**

This has been a good start for the new scrutiny function, we have completed a number of projects, we have invigorated our processes, particularly through the excellent performance of the Leadership Group and the Lead Members and we have begun to deliver more effective challenge by enhancing our relationship with residents. As we discussed in our introduction, this is a challenging time for scrutiny but the challenge brings with it opportunity to work effectively and efficiently to secure the best possible services for our residents. We look forward to meeting this challenge and exploiting these opportunities.



**Cllr Jerry Miles**

Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Cllr Paul Osborn**

Vice Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee



## Statistics

<b>Committee meetings</b>	15
<b>Attendance by Leader of the Council</b>	3
<b>Attendance by Chief Executive</b>	2
<b>Attendance by Portfolio Holders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Cllr Margaret Davine</b>, Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder (1)</li><li>• <b>Cllr Graham Henson</b>, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder, (2)</li><li>• <b>Cllr Rekha Shah</b>, Community and Cultural Services Portfolio Holder (2)</li><li>• <b>Cllr Thayya Idaikkadar</b>, Property and Major Contracts Portfolio Holder (1)</li><li>• <b>Cllr Keith Ferry</b>, Planning, Development and Enterprise Portfolio Holder (1)</li></ul>
<b>Attendance by partners</b>	Nil

# REPORT FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

## Statistics

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

# REPORT FROM THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SUB COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the year members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee took the decision to establish a Health Sub-Committee with the view of providing an arena for more detailed consideration of health issues and to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee time to concentrate on its strategic, overarching role.

Taking into account the Health and Social Care Bill and the current Public Health White paper, it was decided that the name of the committee and the terms of reference needed to be revised in order to reflect all the changes and the move towards increased co-ordination of health and social care services so in March 2011 the committee became the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

- **The Closure of Pinner Village Surgery**

The sudden closure of a GP surgery in the borough in April 2010, Pinner Village Surgery was one of the key reviews conducted by the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee this year. The committee came to consider the closure following a great deal of discontent expressed by residents over the sudden closure.

The review addressed how the closure of Pinner Village was managed by NHS Harrow, the performance management structures in place for managing GP surgeries, the contracts held by GP surgeries and whether more could have been done to avoid the sudden closure of the surgery. Reference to the challenge panel was also used as evidence in the council's response to the Government's White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS' consultation.

The review was carried out through a challenge panel that focussed on establishing what went wrong and what safeguards and risk management structures could be put in place to stop this type of thing from happening again. The panel's final report was also informed by additional meetings they held with NHS Harrow and with evidence and views of residents and patients that were put forward at the engagement meetings organised by NHS Harrow that took place between September and October 2010. Valuable evidence and discussions with the Local Medical Committee (LMC), Harrow Local Involvement Network (LINKs) and the Pinner Association were also very useful in supporting the work of the panel.

The review revealed that there was a need for greater transparency and for clear lines of communication, consultation and engagement on all levels, with service users and also partners. The need for effective performance monitoring and risk management structures was also highlighted by the review. Amongst some of the recommendations made related to ensuring the contracts held with GP are sound, as a result of the review, NHS Harrow reviewed the contracts they held with various GP surgeries in the borough.

- **Health White Paper - Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS**

The Health and Social Care Sub Committee lead the council's response on the Health White Paper by co-ordinating a workshop held in September 2010 involving cross-party Overview and Scrutiny committee councillors, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Health and Well Being, council officers and representatives from Harrow's health partners. The workshop focused on the White Paper and five of the accompanying consultation

documents and was helpful in garnering the views of various individuals and organisations involved in the provision of health and social care services in the borough.

Our response to the white paper was very measured with a note of caution due to the complexity and the need for more detail on the proposals due to the longer term impact and the need to ensure continuity of quality care during the transition stage.

- **Public Health White Paper – Health Lives, Healthy People**

At the end of March 2011 as a committee we also submitted our response to the Public Health White Paper and the committee generally felt that the proposals put forward in the White Paper represent both opportunities and challenges for Harrow. In the submission the Committee acknowledged that the return of the public health function to local authorities could possibly enable better co-ordination of services to address the wider determinants of health and well being. However, given the current difficult financial climate and the need to deliver savings the committee also emphasised that the changes put forward to the NHS and the provision of health, social care and public services could prove to be too much of a challenge.

- **Quality Accounts**

From April 2010, all providers of NHS healthcare services including providers of acute, mental health, learning disability and ambulance services were required to produce a Quality Account, an annual report to the public about the quality of services delivered. Quality Accounts aim to enhance accountability to the public and engage the leaders of an organisation in their quality improvement agenda. As part of our work this year we reviewed the Quality Accounts of North West London Hospital, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust and Royal Nation Orthopaedic Trust.

- **Hyper Acute Stroke Unit**

Following on from the public consultation 'The shape of things to come – Developing new, high-quality major trauma and stroke services for London that we contributed to last year, Northwick Park Hospital became one of London's eight Hyper-Acute Stroke Units, alongside a Stroke Unit and enhanced Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) services. We have also kept a close watch on the progress and in a recent audit carried out by the CQC; the trust has been rated within the top 20% nationally for this service.

- **Integrated Care Organisation**

In January 2010 we had a challenge panel to address the development of the Integrated Care Organisation (ICO) – the merger of NHS Ealing and NHS Harrow to deliver hospital community healthcare services. The committee looked at the progress of the ICO at the start of the year but by April 2010 it was not yet operational and NHS Brent had also joined to form part of the provider alliance. Things are coming into place now and we will continue to monitor the progress of the ICO in the future especially in view of the reconfiguration of health services and increasing cross boarder working in terms of the delivery of health services.

- **The Impact of Housing on Health and Wellbeing**

Following a request from the Scrutiny Leadership group the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-committee addressed the impact of housing on health and wellbeing at their March 2011 meeting. The committee addressed the current situation in respect of the housing need in the borough, the changes to national housing policy which is currently going through in the Localism Bill and they looked at a similar review currently being

carried out by the Greater London Assembly. Given the complexity of this issue, the Committee will be looking at specific ways this work can be carried out in a more focussed way in the new year.



**Cllr Jerry Miles**

Chairman Health and Social Care Sub  
Committee



**Cllr Vina Mithani**

Vice Chairman Health and Social Care Sub  
Committee

# REPORT FROM THE ADULT HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE LEAD MEMBERS

The role of the Adult Health and Social Care Scrutiny Lead members is to consider a range of important health and social care issues that affect Harrow residents, some at committee-level and others outside of the committee through liaison with the Director of Adults and Housing, colleagues at North West London Hospitals, NHS Harrow and other key providers of health and social care services in the borough. Some of the work carried out by the leads is sometimes referred on to the committee in order to assist more in-depth and formal consideration of issues. At a time of considerable change in the delivery and provision of health and social care services on a national level, we are working to ensure scrutiny keeps abreast of the emerging policies and that the structures put in place meets the needs Harrow residents.

## Our areas of focus

We have met on eight occasions during the 2010/11 and these meetings have included quarterly briefings with the Director of Adults and Housing and key officers. We have also met with Chief Executive of NHS Harrow and Brent, the Borough Director for NHS Harrow and the Chair of NHS Harrow.

The areas we have addressed this year are detailed below:

- **Working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)**

Between July 2010 and March 2011, Councillor Vina Mithani was involved in an action learning set focussed on developing closer working relationships between Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the CQC. The action learning set was co-ordinated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS).

At the December Health and Social Care Sub-Committee, the CQC Compliance Manager for Harrow attended the committee to brief the members on their role, the changes in how services would be monitored and the various bodies that will be monitored by them. In particular, the CQC will now be responsible for monitoring individual GP practices, dentists and ambulance services.

As an outcome of the action learning set, guides are currently being developed for Overview and Scrutiny Committee's and the CQC on protocols and constructive ways of working together. We look forward to working closely with the CQC in the near future to ensure the health and social care services for our residents meet essential standards of care and quality.



- **Adult Service Consultation**

Having considered the developments initially at our leads meeting, this item was then followed up by the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee. The committee are now keenly awaiting the results of the Adults services consultation which was kicked off with a pre-consultation in December 2010/ January 2011 to address the dilemma of an increasing demand for Adult Care Services whilst at the same time budgets are being reduced.

The consultation is being undertaken to ensure that people living and working in Harrow are able to influence the planning and future delivery of adult social care services in the borough and to get a better understanding of the services they value the most. The consultation aimed to reach as many people as possible and was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.

- **Personalised Budgets**

We have taken some time to ensure the personalised budgets and processes and structures that we have in place to deliver personalised budgets in the borough are efficient and effective. The Council uses 'Shop for Support', an innovative online website that allows holders of personal budgets to shop for services that suits their needs. Personal budgets aim to give service users greater control over their care and allows them to access relevant services. Around 35% of service users in the borough have personal budgets. We were re-assured by the fact that holders of personal budgets all had a Support Care Plan in place which was used to monitor expenditure; they were required to hold a separate bank account. Not necessarily all service users were eligible to receive a Personal Budget, in view of those with safeguarding concerns. We will continue to monitor developments in this area in the coming year.



- **Children's Health**

This year we have considered some key children's health issues including the establishment of two consultant led Paediatric Assessment Units at Northwick Park Hospital (NPH) and Central Middlesex Hospital (CMH) and a current national review of children's heart surgery.

Better services for local children - a public consultation for Brent and Harrow

The committee considered the plans and proposals for the establishment of two consultant led Paediatric Assessment Units at Northwick Park Hospital (NPH) and Central Middlesex Hospital (CMH) and to centralise the in patient service at Northwick Park Hospital. The provision of the outcomes of the independent assessment that was conducted and NWLH early communication with the committee was welcomed in terms of these developments.



## Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) - Children's Heart Surgery

A national review of children's heart surgery is currently being carried out by the NHS National Specialised Commissioning Team. Rather than the establishment of a London-wide JOSC on the national review of children's heart surgery we contributed to the standing JOSC in Outer North East London (ONEL) along with other London Authorities.

- **Performance of GP Out-of-Hours Service**

We picked up the issue of Harrow's GP out-of-hours service in our leads meeting following a report published in March 2010 by the Patients Association. The report revealed that Harrow's GP out-of-hours service had been rated the sixth worst in the country. We promptly followed up on this to assess the basis of the information and whether it was founded. To our relief it appeared that the evidence was not fully robust. However, there was a need for improvement and NHS Harrow had put corrective measures in place to address the situation and it appeared to be under control. We will continue to monitor this closely in the new year.

### **Looking to the future**

Over the coming years matters relating to health and social care will remain paramount. We will continue to monitor the developments on a national level and in particular the progress of the Health and Social Care Bill. We expect a number of changes in the delivery of local health and social care services will keep us very busy over the coming year.



**Cllr Ann Gate**

Policy Lead  
Adult Health and Social Care



**Cllr Vina Mithani**

Performance Lead  
Adult Health and Social Care

# **REPORT FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS**

The role of the Children and Young People leads is to consider issues which impact on the wellbeing of children across the borough. The change in national government in May last year has brought with it change in how young people will be served and the impact of the considerable cuts in public spending have led the council and our partners to pursue significant change in the way we deliver services to our young people. We outline below some of the specific issues we have considered.

## **Our areas of focus**

In 2010/11 we addressed a range of important issues that affect children and young people in Harrow. Regular meetings were held throughout the year including quarterly meetings with the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

- **Teenage Placement Strategy**

Our aim was to assist with critical issues concerning children's social care placements, improve the choice and quality of placements and support services and promote life chances and outcomes for looked after children. Every aspect of this has been closely examined by the director and her staff and every case could be tracked if necessary. The numbers of children in care in the Borough could change very quickly at short notice.

- **Special Needs Transport**

Capita has led on this project and the benefits of the changes are now beginning to be realised. There will be £400k in savings in 2010/11 arising from new routes and staff terms and conditions. The second phase of the project would impact more on adults. The project is on track for savings and is part of a wider West London initiative.

- **Time taken for Initial Assessment**

Following the loss of experienced staff, a backlog of initial assessments had built up, however the requirement for completion of initial assessment has changed from seven to ten days and we were advised that the situation had improved.

- **Comprehensive Spending Review**

The impact on this far reaching review as it affected children's services was of course a matter of great concern to us. We will be monitoring the impact of the spending review on children's services during the coming months.

- **Academies**

Some or all of the 7 high schools in Harrow may decide to convert to academy status during May 2011. An academy is a publicly funded independent school free from local authority control and has considerable autonomy in comparison with LA maintained schools. There will be an impact on the Council's financial position if a number of schools do convert to academies. We will continue to monitor this in the coming months.

- **Early Intervention and Targeted Services**

We are aware that this is an extremely important issue, if an authority neglects this aspect the end result may be more children coming into care in the long run. Again, this is something we will continue to monitor.

- **Integrated model – Children’s single point of contact**

Comparison with other London authorities showed Harrow’s total spend on children’s services to be low. The Council needed to redesign our systems to ensure that the best outcomes for children and young people were secured and all resources were used efficiently. In order to deliver this a new operating model needed to be developed. We have been briefed on this initiative and will continue to monitor it during the coming months.

## **Looking to the future**

Significant changes in Children’s Services will continue to roll out during the next year and we will continue to monitor the success of these changes in order to safeguard the wellbeing of our younger residents.



**Cllr Christine Bednell**

Policy Lead

Children and Young People



**Cllr Krishna James**

Performance Lead

Children and Young People

# REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE EFFECTIVENESS SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS

The role of the Corporate Effectiveness scrutiny lead members is to investigate how well the organisation's infrastructure supports it to deliver the frontline services that people receive from the council. How well our financial and human resources operate, how we engage with residents and how we manage our performance and customer focus are all central to this. At time such as this, when the council is looking to reduce significantly its spending whilst at the same time maintain effective frontline service delivery, it is critical that scrutiny maintains effective challenge, ensuring the infrastructure to support frontline service delivery is still robust but at the same time proportionate to the role and need to find savings.

## Our areas of focus

We have met six times since the election in May last year and have scheduled into our programme of meetings quarterly briefings with the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director of Finance. We have also received a number of policy briefings relevant to our area – the Assistant Chief Executive advised us of the implications of the abolition of the national performance framework and we were also advised of the implications of the Localism Bill.

We have focussed on a number of specific issues and these are outlined below.

- **Debt Recovery**

One of our early issues of concern has been the processes for recovering, in particular, Council Tax arrears from residents. We have been advised of a number of situations in which our approach seems disproportionate to the amount of debt outstanding and the culpability of the debtors. We have received evidence both regarding the council's own policy and the policy of other London boroughs and we acknowledge that our policy and performance is on a par with that of our neighbours. However, we remain concerned about the inflexibility of the process as applied in Harrow and will continue to monitor this area.

- **Council Finances**

We were briefed on the council's financial position in September, at our meeting the Director of Finance advised us of the likely outturn position and some of the budget pressures anticipated over the medium term as the Comprehensive Spending Review unfolds. The anticipated £50m of savings proved to be a fairly accurate assessment and we will continue to seek briefings on the council's performance in the delivery of this savings target.

- **Better deal for Residents**

Closely linked to the Council's financial situation is the delivery of the Better Deal for Residents programme. This is the key programme which will help the organisation to transform itself and deliver the quantity of savings currently required. There are many components the programme and closest to our brief are the mobile and flexible working project and the business administration project. In December, we received a detailed briefing on the delivery of these important projects which will hopefully transform the way the Council does business. Again, we will continue to monitor this.

- **Workforce Planning**

One of the key areas for our attention is the effectiveness of the staff we employ. Are the right staff in place? Are they appropriately trained? How motivated are they to deliver services? In order to ensure that our most important asset is properly utilised, we have received a number of briefings from the Assistant Chief Executive. These briefings have included

- sickness levels – which continue to decline
- use of agency staff – likely to increase in the context of the budget reductions likely to be experienced
- IPAD performance – improving
- Redundancy management – proposals are in place to minimize the cost of redundancy

This is a critical area for us to continue to monitor in a period of significant reduction in our size and is something we will return to at our next briefing.

- **Customer Care**

As the organisation shrinks in size and reduces services, it is critical that the Council monitors the impact on residents and in particular how well it deals with residents who contact us with regard to services. In particular we were briefed by the Assistant Chief Executive that Contact Centre performance is improving steadily in terms of answering calls, reducing waiting times, managing avoidable contact and resolving queries at first point of contact but a number of challenges remain and we will return to these over the next twelve months. .

- **Community Engagement**

Having considered the implications of the Localism Bill, we are aware of the need for the Council to ensure that it has robust mechanisms in place to engage with our residents. At our briefing in March, the Policy Officer Consultation briefed us on the structures which are in place to support effective engagement between ourselves and residents. This is an area of particular interest to scrutiny as a whole and we are hoping to improve our engagement processes with residents. We hope we can benefit from the already existing expertise in the council and look forward to improving processes overall.

## **Looking to the future**

We are clearly entering into a period of significant change and challenge for the council in which the way we work must radically change. We will continue to focus on these issues to ensure that the Council emerges from the current financial difficulties in the strongest possible position.



**Councillor Jerry Miles**

Policy Lead  
Corporate Effectiveness



**Councillor Tony Ferrari**

Performance Lead  
Corporate Effectiveness

# **REPORT FROM THE SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS**

The scope of activity of the Safer and Stronger Communities lead members focuses upon how well the council and our partners secure a safe and inclusive society for our residents. It covers such things as crime, fear of crime, engagement and community cohesion. The change in national government has precipitated a number of challenges for us in terms of the implications for community engagement of the Localism Bill and the reductions in funding for police services.

## **Our areas of focus**

We have met five times since the election and have received briefings from the Divisional Director Environmental Services, the Divisional Director Community and Culture, the Head of Service Community Development, the Borough Commander and the Harrow representative on the Metropolitan Police Authority.

We have monitored the issues outlined below.

- **Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

At the start of our term in office, we were advised of the policy changes being proposed by central government. The Policing White Paper makes a number of proposals and whilst some of which are of limited relevance to Harrow, proposals such as those to abolish the Metropolitan Police Authority warranted consideration. As such we invited our representative on the MPA to meet with us to explain the implications of the proposals. We will return to this as the legislation emerges

- **Police Funding Reductions**

Monitoring the effectiveness of our borough policing is a key area of our responsibility. Of great concern to us this year has been the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review for policing in the borough. We were briefed by both our MPA representative and the Borough Commander on the implications of cuts likely to be in the region of 20% over the next four years. However, we were reassured at the Borough Commander's commitment to maintain the officer numbers in the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, subject to more flexible deployment. In order to properly scrutinise this area we will continue to monitor policing arrangements and will seek further information on the Safer Neighbourhoods models being adopted across London and further detail on the community boards.

- **Neighbourhood Champions**

During the year, the Overview and Scrutiny asked us to seek further information on how the implementation of the Neighbourhood Champions scheme was progressing, in particular:

- How the involvement of ward councillors would be incorporated into a revised mission statement and integrated into the scheme as a whole.
- Why Cabinet had decided not to utilise the flagging system as proposed in the report.

The Divisional Director of Environment briefed us on these issues and we have reported our findings back to the Overview and Scrutiny committee which has scheduled a further discussion at the committee in June with the relevant officers.

- **Harrow Association for Voluntary Service**

We were very concerned to hear about the problems at Harrow Association for Voluntary Service. The Overview and Scrutiny committee asked us to examine the implications for the Council of the HAVS situation in light of the Pricewaterhouse Cooper report and in particular how it was continuing to operate. We are grateful to the Divisional Director Community and Culture for the briefing she was able to give us at the time. This issue was escalated by the Overview and Scrutiny committee and a challenge panel has taken place, chaired by Cllr Asante. The report is being finalised.

- **Development of a Travellers Strategy for the Borough**

We are concerned that the push towards the development of a travellers' strategy has lessened. We are aware of a number of issues need to be addressed if travelling communities are to access the services they require and the accommodation they prefer. Whilst there is no longer any imperative towards the production of a strategy, we would nonetheless urge a co-ordination of service delivery for members of this community. As such this issue we will continue to monitor this area and will seek further advice from other boroughs re best practice.

- **Support to community groups around festivals**

In the context of the significant cuts in Council expenditure, we sought further advice as to the support which will be provided to community groups around specific festivals in the context of increasing competition for ever decreasing resources. We were particularly concerned about the role of schools as community resources in this context and we will be returning to this issue in the coming year. We made a number of proposals to officers with regard to working with schools, effective communication and the production of an events guide which we hope were helpful.

## **Looking to the Future**

Our biggest concern is the impact continuing reductions in public funding will have on crime and community cohesion in our borough. We feel that it is crucial to consider more imaginative ways of engaging with our community and maximising the use of community resources to safeguard the integrity of our diverse community in the face of these difficulties. We will continue to press our colleagues within the council and our partners elsewhere to ensure such a precious asset is not jeopardised.



**Councillor Chris Mote**

Policy Lead  
Safer and Stronger Communities



**Councillor Nana Asante**

Performance Lead  
Safer and Stronger Communities

# REPORT FROM THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS

In 2010/11 we have been struck by the breadth of our policy area. By meeting with key officers and portfolio holders we have seen that delivering sustainable development and enterprise requires a truly cross-cutting approach. Broadly speaking we consider *sustainable development* to be that which meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. We consider *enterprise* to be business activity within an economic development and or regeneration context.

## Our areas of focus

Over the past twelve months we have received briefings on the following areas:

- Economic development
- Environmental services
- Housing Ambition Plan
- Leaseholder charging
- Local Implementation Plan
- Property disposal

We also met with the Corporate Director, Place Shaping, and the relevant portfolio holders and we hope to work with them again in the future to determine areas where scrutiny can support the work of the council and its partners.

### • **Economic development**

We received a briefing on the new action plan for *Enterprising Harrow*, the economic development strategy for Harrow. There are some key challenges for the council and its partners going forward, in that, for example, there is a move away from grants to specific local authorities to deliver projects such as employment support. Instead there is greater emphasis on the tendering of contracts for pan-London delivery of such projects. We will seek an update on the impact of these changes in 2011/12.

We were also briefed on the Local Economic Assessment for Harrow. Though the national requirement for producing an assessment has been withdrawn, Harrow considered it to be beneficial in supporting local planning.

### • **Environmental services**

Our briefing on environmental services covered the London Permit Scheme (LoPS), West London Waste disposal sites, climate change and snow. With regard to climate change, the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee will be seeking an update on the work undertaken by scrutiny in 2009/10 with a view to contributing to the consultation process on the new Climate Change Strategy.

### • **Housing Ambition Plan**

The Divisional Director advised us that the Housing Service were looking to strengthen the council's resident engagement approaches, and to develop a more systematic approach to involving residents in the review and development of housing services. She proposed that scrutiny consider examining the division's progress on improving engagement. Resident



engagement was considered by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee, and Members were pleased to note the significant improvement in resident perception of the housing service.

- **Leaseholder charging**

Following concerns from residents, we requested a detailed briefing on work undertaken to streamline services to leaseholders. This included Lean reviews of 'leaseholder charging' and of 'right to buy'. We also discussed approaches to voids, sub-letting, and forthcoming national policy developments. We will maintain a watching brief on these areas in 2011/12.

- **Property disposal**

We received a briefing on the principles informing property strategy, which is driven partly by the needs of the various service delivery areas and partly by estate development, for example holding property to generate revenue as well as other factors such as a level of backlog maintenance. We also discussed the property aspect of the council's transformation programme, the Better Deal for Residents Programme. We will seek a further briefing as future proposals develop.

### **Looking to the future**

In 2011/12 we will continue to encourage the council to consider all facets of sustainable development and enterprise and its impact on service delivery.

We have proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake a review of disabled access to facilities such as Neighbourhood Resource Centres. We hope that through this project we can engage with local residents and their needs in terms of accessing services.

Going forward we will be paying close attention as national policy developments begin to have a local impact and we hope to support the organisation in responding to the challenge of delivering a sustainable Harrow for the future.



**Councillor Stanley Sheinwald**  
Policy Lead  
Sustainable Development and Enterprise



**Councillor Sue Anderson**  
Performance Lead  
Sustainable Development and Enterprise

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Following the election in May 2010 there has been a programme of training and development for scrutiny members throughout the course of the year, this was developed following a training needs analysis carried out by the scrutiny team during Summer 2010. The programme was delivered in house by London Borough of Harrow scrutiny officers, with the support of other Council officer in November, January and March.

Details of the sessions are as follows:-

- **May 2010 Introduction to Scrutiny**  
A DVD produced by South East Employers entitled "What Has Scrutiny Ever Done For Us" was shown, followed by a general introduction to scrutiny and the Council's scrutiny team, this was followed by an interactive question and answer session.
- **July 2010 About Scrutiny**  
This session developed the themes introduced in May in more depth and included legal powers and duties, scrutiny roles and scrutiny in Harrow. An interactive quiz about LB Harrow and its corporate priorities followed.
- **September 2010 Scrutiny Skills**  
This session considered how the work programme is developed, scoping projects, evidence gathering, questioning techniques, monitoring outcomes and mediation. This was followed by a practical exercise.
- **November 2010 Scrutiny of finance**  
Members had requested training on how to scrutinise the Council's finances, a joint session was therefore held with the then Director of Finance. The Director gave details of the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement by the Government, the scrutiny session concentrated on how scrutiny can add value and effective lines of questioning.
- **January 2011 Performance and Finance**  
Members had requested a training session on the council's performance framework, this was delivered by the Council's performance officers. There was also a further session on finance (as requested by members), including basics such as the difference between capital and revenue and sources of local authority finance.
- **March 2011 Consultation**  
The Council's consultation policy officer delivered a session on how to consult with residents which was very well received. The session included practical work on how to engage with (1) young people at a bus station and (2) frail elderly people in a residential home. Members agreed that this was an area that could benefit from further exploration.

Further training and development sessions will, be held during the course of 2011/12 and will follow further discussion with scrutiny councillors with regard to the specific content of training and preferred methods of delivery.

## **REPORT FROM THE CALL-IN SUB COMMITTEE**

There have been no meetings of either the Call-In sub committee or the Education Call In sub committee.



**Cllr Jerry Miles**

Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee