

CABINET

11 NOVEMBER 2004

Reference from the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 October 2004: Scrutiny Review of the New Harrow Project

1. At its meeting on 19 October 2004, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Review of the New Harrow Project (NHP).
2. The review had examined the overall concept of the New Harrow Project, and had also included case studies of the roll-out of the Public Realm Maintenance services to Areas 2 and 3, and the community schools pilot. The report of the latter case study had already been considered by Cabinet in July 2004.
3. Comments on the report having been invited, a Member stated that, while he supported a lot of the recommendations arising from the review, he was unable to endorse the report. He had concerns about the methodology and conclusions of the review group, and felt that there was insufficient evidence to support the assertions made. He also felt that the review had not clearly defined what was meant by the NHP, and was disappointed that it had not examined issues around value for money, or alternative models for the organisation of the Council.
4. Members who had participated in the review group commented that it would have been helpful to have heard the Member's comments earlier. The importance of Member involvement, as set out in Recommendation 8 of the review report, was highlighted. With regard to evidence for the recommendations, a Member who had not been involved in the review suggested that, in any scrutiny review, review group members were looking at a set of inferences. In light of the work undertaken by the review group, the inferences could be validated from the evidence and were sufficiently broad to be supportable. He also pointed out that to have sought further evidence would have required an even greater level of involvement and resources.
5. The Chair, who had led the review, added that the review group would be continuing to examine the NHP and that the next phase of the review group's work would address many of the issues raised; she invited the Member to participate in that process. She also pointed out that the effectiveness or value for money of the new Council structure could not be assessed until it had been in place for a while, and that senior management appointments were still being made during the review period.
6. Members endorsed the recommendations of the review group and, in particular, Recommendation 1 of the main report, which related to the need for rigorous groundwork before the adoption of projects and the implementation of fully documented project planning processes. A Member felt that the review report illustrated that scrutiny could have more impact by tackling on-going issues than by carrying out retrospective reviews.

7. The Committee **RESOLVED**, inter alia, that
- (1) the report of the Review Group be endorsed; and
 - (2) the report of the Review Group be referred to Cabinet for consideration.**

FOR CONSIDERATION

Contact: Claire Vincent, Committee Section, tel: 020 8424 1637

Background Papers: Report to, and draft minutes of, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 19 October 2004