



LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TAKE A CHANCE ON 'e'

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Report of the Scrutiny Review Group

March 2003

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
Harrow’s Vision of eGov	6
Organisational Change	7
Communication	7
Leadership/Patterns of Change	7
Cross-Departmental and Partnership Working	8
Training	8
Incentive and Monitoring Structures and Upgrade Procedures	9
3. INTRODUCTION	10
4. METHODOLOGY	11
5. TAKE A CHANCE ON ‘e’ SCOPING	13
6. KEY FINDINGS: HARROW’S VISION OF eGOV	15
6.1.1. What We Found	15
6.1.2. Analysis	15
6.1.3. Conclusion	16
6.1.4. Recommendations	17
7. KEY FINDINGS: ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE	18
7.1. Communication	18
7.1.1. What We Found	18
7.1.2. Analysis	18
7.1.3. Conclusion	18
7.1.4. Recommendations	19
7.2. Leadership/Patterns of Change	20
7.2.1. What We Found	20
7.2.2. Analysis	20
7.2.3. Conclusion	20
7.2.4. Recommendations	21
7.3. Cross-Departmental and Partnership Working	22
7.3.1. What We Found	22
7.3.2. Analysis	22
7.3.3. Conclusion	22
7.3.4. Recommendations	22
7.4. Training	24
7.4.1. What We Found	24
7.4.2. Analysis	24
7.4.3. Conclusion	24
7.4.4. Recommendations	24
7.5. Incentive and Monitoring Structures and Upgrade Procedures	25
7.5.1. What We Found	25
7.5.2. Analysis	25
7.5.3. Conclusion	26
7.5.4. Recommendations	26

8. FOLLOW UP	27
9. LESSONS LEARNT FOR SCRUTINY	28
9.1. Introduction	28
9.2. What Worked	28
9.3. Signposts for Improvement: Resources and Procedures	28
9.4. Signposts for Improvement: Participation	29
9.5. Conclusion	30
10. RECOMMENDATIONS	31
10.1. Harrow's Vision of eGov	31
10.2. Organisational Change - Communication	31
10.3. Organisational Change - Leadership/Patterns of Change	32
10.4. Organisational Change - Cross-Departmental and Partnership Working	33
10.5. Organisational Change - Training	33
10.6. Organisational Change - Incentive and Monitoring Structures and Upgrade Procedures	34
11. APPENDICES	Circulated Separately
11.1. Collated Results from Questionnaires Completed by CMT and the Focus Groups of Non-Executive Members, Middle Managers and Front-line Staff	
11.2. Pre-submitted Views from Middle Managers	
11.2.1 Vision – Transforming Services	
11.2.2 Vision – Renewing Democracy	
11.2.3 Vision – Promoting Local Economic Vitality	
11.2.4 Barriers	
11.2.5 Way Forward	
11.3. Key Points Raised at the Focus Group & Other Meetings	
11.3.1. Key Points from Focus Group of Middle Managers	
11.3.2. Key Points from CMT	
11.3.3. Key Points from Focus Group of Front-line Staff	
11.3.4. Key Points from Focus Group of Non-Executive Members	
11.3.5. Key Points from Meeting with Group Leaders	
11.3.6. Key Points from Meeting with Chief Executive	
11.4. Quick Wins Submitted by Staff and a Member	
11.5. Harrow's Implementing Electronic Government 2 (IEG2) Statement	
11.6. Extract from the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12 February 2003	

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review group would like to thank those Members and officers who helped them in this review by giving up their time and sharing their perceptions and views. The group feels that this has been of tremendous value to the Council in providing a picture of where e-government is currently at across the different cross-sections of the Council, producing many ideas which will help to develop Harrow's e-government vision and providing a picture of the current culture within the Authority relating to change.

Thanks are also due to Chris Naylor, IDeA, for his inspiration and support in conducting the review.

This report has been compiled by the Members named on the front cover of the report. The views expressed are solely theirs.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is little that is new in this report. Most, if not all, of the findings have been reported elsewhere, most notably in the recent CPA review. Harrow has already begun to plan how to address issues raised in this report.

What is new is that this report is the product of an internal Harrow process, and contains more detailed recommendations for change. It derives from a desire by Members and staff to improve performance for service users and reflects a strong commitment by all to improve.

In a recent consultation document the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister stated:

“.. authorities should evaluate critically their progress ... and identify how they perform against the four key building blocks:

- ownership of problems and willingness to change;
- a sustained focus on what matters;
- the capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement; and
- integration of best value into day-to-day management.¹”

We believe that this document contributes to Harrow's ongoing journey along this road. We trust that others will take the next step.

Harrow's Vision of eGov

Whilst there was a limited awareness of the national eGov agenda at all levels of the organisation, we found a strong sense of the potential for eGov to transform services in particular and heard occasional examples of the medium term implications for individual Departments' services. There was, however, no shared vision of the Authority's goals for eGov, which was perceived as a Government agenda. The common assumption was that progress on eGov would be unplanned and sporadic. We conclude that without change, implementation of eGov in Harrow is likely to be fragmented and haphazard.

We believe, however, that the high commitment and abilities of our hard working staff and the strong shared political will across all parties to ensure the availability of resources for eGov can be harnessed to provide a good basis for developing the corporate vision. Critical to success will be the strengthening of the corporate and Departmental planning processes to ensure that they are not only fully integrated with, but also underpin, all the Authority's key activities.

We strongly recommend the development of an eGov implementation plan for Harrow.

We equally strongly recommend the formulation of an integrated Corporate Plan which sets out Harrow's corporate vision and the detailed principles that underlie more detailed plans. The eGov implementation plan, departmental plans and all other planning, budget and performance monitoring reports should integrate with the Corporate Plan.

We would recommend that plans should be the authority from which all action stems. Performance should be assessed in parallel with the published plans and

¹ Draft Circular on Best Value and Performance Improvement: A Consultation Paper, 7/02

this should include an evaluation of how plans have been implemented, monitored and reviewed post-implementation.

Organisational Change

This Scrutiny began with the intention of examining Harrow's approach to eGov. However, almost all focus groups as well as the CMT and Group Leaders' meetings moved quickly into a discussion of change management in Harrow generally, perhaps because of the embryonic and uncertain nature of eGov in Harrow. This report, therefore, addresses issues pertinent to change management in Harrow, as well as eGov in particular.

Our abiding impression was of an organisation with high quality staff who are committed and work hard, but who lack effective organisational support structures. Much effort, and enthusiasm, is therefore wasted and goes unrecognised.

Communication

Those we spoke to, throughout the organisation, felt poorly informed about the Council's plans for eGov and the common perception is that stakeholders are similarly uninformed. This feeling of being poorly informed extended beyond the field of eGov to communications across the Authority. Staff perceived communication as only being top down with, for example, little real consultation prior to decisions being taken.

Good two way communications are essential to any organisation at all times and particularly important for Harrow at this critical change period. Whilst there has been a recent increase in the quantity of information, this has apparently not increased the level of confidence in the communications process. The Authority needs to review the way it communicates, including the quality, timing, medium and quantity of information disseminated. Particular consideration should be given to developing the use of the website, the intranet and the internal email newsletter, Harrow Update.

We recommend that a corporate policy is drawn up, as part of the Corporate Plan, relating to timely communications both within and external to the Council. This plan should also address issues around the use and development of both the website and intranet.

Leadership/Patterns of Change

There was a common perception of an unplanned approach to change which was underpinned by a sense of fear, often associated with poor past experiences or a lack of risk management skills.

Possibly as a result of a lack of managerial resource, there has been a tendency to adopt a 'champion' led approach which relies heavily on the unsupported competence, vision and skills of the individual. The change management process is thereby weakened.

Generally, management skills were perceived to be 'traditional' and hierarchical in the approach to staff management and motivation. The Best Value process had yet to become meaningful to staff at the front-line, but is improving the ways of working of middle and senior management.

We strongly recommend the adoption of a more formal and documented approach to change which incorporates a range of key elements including the identification of measurable objectives, thorough research of good practices elsewhere, full examination of the available options, pre-implementation identification of systems and resource requirements, appropriate pre-implementation consultations, transparency, and post-implementation review of the process.

We also recommend that the risk analysis undertaken as part of IEG2 should be supplemented by an integrated approach to risk management within the Authority and that this recommendation extends beyond eGov to management processes generally.

Cross-Departmental and Partnership Working

We found some evidence of cross-departmental working. However, we also found that a 'silo' approach to departmental working was common and that there was clearly much scope for improving both cross-departmental and partnership working. Departmental budgetary arrangements did not support the development of cross-departmental working to facilitate efficiency savings and resource sharing.

We found little evidence of a common corporate identity although the New Harrow Project was already challenging departmental barriers.

Further work is needed to facilitate cross-departmental and partnership working and to continue to encourage innovative ways of working together, both within the Council and with our partner bodies. These will need to be firmly embedded within the context of proper change management and the framework of the Corporate Plan.

In particular, we recommend that suitable incentives should be established to encourage the development of service centres (such as for document imaging) offering eGov facilities associated with economies of scale / timely solutions to all departments.

Training

There was common agreement that training needs associated with eGov implementation were not being systematically identified. There was little linkage between these needs and service improvement.

We believe that increased outreach training work with the voluntary sector and disadvantaged groups would not only contribute to improving service delivery but would support the national strategy's aim of strengthening economic regeneration.

We believe that the identification of critical success factors should be identified for training needs.

We recommend that the Corporate Plan should set out, in a structured way, the steps necessary to identify training needs in departmental plans and that more specific criteria to identify training needs are specified in the corporate eGov implementation plan.

Specific training needs should also continue to be identified in departmental plans and should be linked to the criteria in the Corporate and eGov Plans, and with measurable service improvements.

Incentive and Monitoring Structures and Upgrade Procedures

There was general agreement that the authority is highly risk averse, often does not capture good ideas nor share good practices, and does not undertake sufficient post-implementation reviews to identify successes or failures adequately.

The organisational culture appears to be focused on problem solving and service enhancement on a piecemeal basis, often in response to external imperatives, the preservation or growth of departmental budgets and the control of information. eGov is no exception to this approach with departmental leads being the norm.

Past technological under-investment is clearly a problem although this does provide the opportunity to pursue a radical and strategic approach to addressing the Council's clear IT needs. Greater resources need to be devoted to identifying the IT and eGov choices facing the authority and these choices must be debated at the strategic level.

We saw no evidence of performance management being linked to budgeting with the former being driven primarily by Government requirements or Departmental concerns. As previously discussed in relation to change management, there was little indication of a corporate approach to incentive and monitoring structures. The Authority's need to integrate systematically its financial and performance management structures is clear.

The feeling amongst front-line staff in particular was of a lack of recognition of their ideas and of limited opportunities for internal advancement. We found many examples of staff being willing to take on greater decision making responsibilities and believe that there is also much scope to involve front-line staff in particular in the change process before decisions are taken. We are firmly of the opinion that the adoption of such approaches are essential to access the enormous resource of staff experience and ideas and to demonstrate the real value placed on staff views, thereby encouraging positive participation in the change process.

Whilst eGov itself has a strong role to play in this area, it must itself be subject to corporate priorities and judged according to clearly defined service outcomes.

We recommend that a more formal documented approach to planning for change be adopted as outlined above.

We recommend that the forthcoming investment in IT foreseen by the authority should also be subject to the formal documented approach to planning for change referred to above.

3. INTRODUCTION

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was formed in May 2002 following the Council's adoption of an administration comprising a Leader and Cabinet. In formulating its work programme, the Committee agreed that it would, as part of its learning process, pilot different methods of conducting its reviews. It was decided that a review of e-government would be undertaken through a peer-type review, supported by some external facilitation. The IDeA was commissioned to act in this capacity. The Review Group recognised that adopting a peer style of review would restrict the depth of consideration of the subject and accepted that the process could constrain its investigations. The Group agreed, however, that it could re-visit particular issues if required, either through its monitoring of the outcomes of the review or through associated reviews in the forthcoming year. Provision will be made in the Committee's work programme for these options.

This report addresses

1. the vision of what e-government will achieve across the Council
2. the way the culture of the organisation help/hinders the achievement of this vision
3. the lessons learnt for the process of Scrutiny

The Review Group comprised:

Councillors Choudhury
Ingram
Jean Lammiman
Lavingia
C Mote
Paul Osborn.

The Group was supported by officers from Audit & Consultancy Services, Committee Section, IT Services and the Communications Section.

The review itself was undertaken over a period of 2 weeks from 10-24 February 2003.

4. METHODOLOGY

A pre-scoping day, facilitated by Chris Naylor, IDeA, was held on 29 January 2003 which set the scene for the review through the consideration of

- the National Strategy for e-government (which can be viewed and downloaded on www.localgov.gov.uk) and what it means in practice
- the potential foci for a review
- the role of scrutiny
- e-government as it currently is in Harrow (including the Council's Implementing Electronic Government Statement).

Towards the end of the day, the review group determined its focus of the review, the objectives of which were agreed should be:

1. To identify a vision of what e-government will achieve across the Council from the perspectives of
 - Transforming services
 - Promoting local democracy
 - Promoting economic vitality
2. To explore the way the culture of the organisation help/hinders the achievement of this vision.
3. To provide a facilitated learning experience for the review group in undertaking a 'peer style' scrutiny review.

In the light of these objectives, the agreed timescale for the review and the limited resources available to the review group, it was decided that funding and IT specifications should be specifically excluded from the scope.

A project plan was formulated which included the following activities:

- Facilitated pre-scoping day – 29 January 2003
- Agreement of the scope by the Review Group
- Issue of an email bulletin to staff informing them of the review and its objectives
- Invitation to UNISON to participate in the focus groups of front-line staff and managers
- Establishment of middle managers, front-line staff and non-Executive Member focus groups
- Briefing of all staff and non-Executive Members participating in the reviews prior to their respective meetings
- Design of questionnaire for use in the focus groups and CMT
- Meeting of the Review Group to finalise preparations for the review meetings and confirm the project plan and responsibilities assigned to individuals – 7 February 2003
- Meeting with Group Leaders and the Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and IT – 10 February 2003
- Meeting with the Corporate Management Team - 12 February 2003
- Focus groups of middle managers and front-line staff – 12 February 2003
- Endorsement of the scope and preliminary verbal report on the findings to date to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12 February 2003

- One-to-one meeting with the Chief Executive - 13 February 2003
- Cross-party focus group of non-Executive Members – 17 February 2003
- Meeting of Review Group to agree the thrust of the report – 17 February 2003
- Meeting of Review Group to consider draft report – 26 February 2003
- Final agreement to draft report by Review Group – 12 March 2003
- Circulation of draft report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members for consideration – 12 March 2003
- Feedback meeting with the Corporate Management Team to discuss the Review Group's findings – 26 March 2003
- Submission of the report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for endorsement – 1 April 2003
- Feedback of findings to all participants via email
- Issue of a general press release and an email bulletin to all staff summarizing key findings
- Formal presentation of the report to Cabinet – 15 April 2003
- Presentation of the report to Council, if required
- Post-review evaluation – April 2003.

In total the review group met together on 4 occasions. Mechanisms were put in place to facilitate communication between members of the group on completion of their individually assigned responsibilities, thus ensuring that the whole group was kept abreast of developments as they arose.

Those participating in the focus groups were provided with briefing information which included the purpose of the review, the role of scrutiny within the Council, the roles which Members and officers would be playing in the focus group meetings and the ground rules for the operation of the groups. Participants were assured that although their views may be reproduced in this report, they would not be specifically attributed to particular individuals. UNISON was invited to send a representative to the middle managers and front-line staff focus groups but did not pursue this option.

The CMT and the focus groups of non-Executive Members, middle managers and front-line staff were all asked to complete an identical questionnaire targeted at eliciting their perceptions on a number of areas of organisational change. The collated results from the questionnaires are at Appendix 1.

Those participating in the focus group of middle managers were also asked to give some thought before the focus group meeting as to what they felt should comprise the vision for e-government in Harrow. To allow greater time for discussion, they were asked to submit their views prior to the meeting. The submitted views are at Appendix 2.

The key points of discussion at each of the focus group meetings are set out in Appendix 3.

5. TAKE A CHANCE ON ‘e’ SCOPING

SUBJECT	TAKE A CHANCE ON ‘e’
OBJECTIVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To identify a vision of what e-government will achieve across the Council from the perspectives of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Transforming services ◦ Promoting local democracy ◦ Promoting economic vitality 2. To explore the way the culture of the organisation help/hinders the achievement of this vision. 3. To provide a facilitated learning experience for the review group in undertaking a ‘peer style’ scrutiny review.
NOT objectives	<p>There are many drivers to eGov. We do not intend to examine the following drivers in detail:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding 2. IT specifications
SCOPE	<p>Harrow’s Vision of eGov – what should be our goals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Transforming services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Who are our partners to be? ◦ Who are our target stakeholders? ◦ How can eGov facilitate communication? ◦ Which services are/could be joined up? ◦ Who are key enablers? ◦ Which core systems are/could be supported? ◦ Renewing local democracy: ◦ Promoting local economic vitality: <p>Organisational Change – what is it about our ‘culture’ that helps or hinders eGov?</p> <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Do all stakeholders understand the vision of eGov? ◦ Is eGov important to Harrow? ◦ What ‘pattern’ do we expect implementation to follow? Will this pattern work? ◦ What reasons will be given if we fail to achieve an optimum outcome? ◦ How does eGov fit/not fit with the Harrow ‘way of doing things’? <p>Leadership roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Who is responsible for implementation? ◦ What is the role of those in each focus group? Those they report to / those who report to them? What blocks the effective performance of this role? ◦ How can we facilitate cross-departmental working?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ How can we facilitate partner involvement? <p>Training - Have we got our approach to identifying needs right?</p> <p>Incentive and monitoring structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ What are the fears of each focus group? How can these be addressed? ◦ Do we capture good ideas and share good practices? ◦ What are the risks of eGov? Are we supportive of risk taking? ◦ How does eGov fit with public sector accountability? ◦ How do we measure success or failure?
COMMITTEE	Overview & Scrutiny
REVIEW GROUP MEMBERS	Councillors Choudhury, Ingram, Jean Lammiman, Lavingia, C Mote, Osborn
ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER FOR REVIEW	Duncan Chapman
SUPPORT OFFICER	Frances Hawkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
COMMITTEE/ ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	Claire Vincent, Committee Secretary
EXTERNAL INPUT	Not directly
METHODOLOGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Focus groups of front-line staff, middle managers & Non-Executive Councillors ◦ Meeting with the Corporate Management Team ◦ Meetings with key officers & Councillors ◦ Evaluation of findings against Government guidelines & good practice in the light of the Council's corporate priorities & the IEG2 statement. ◦ Formulation of recommendations around the vision for e-government & factors affecting organisational change, as appropriate.
TIMESCALE	<p>Review to be undertaken over 3 weeks in February 2003</p> <p>Report to Cabinet on 18 March 2003</p> <p>Submission to Council 18 April 2003</p>

6. KEY FINDINGS: HARROW'S VISION OF eGOV

6.1.1. What We Found

There was limited awareness, even amongst Members, of the three elements of the national eGov agenda prior to the focus groups.

The group that felt the best informed as to Harrow's plans for eGov were the middle managers – but even here the score on the standard questionnaire was only 4.5. Front-line staff and non-Executive Members both gave an average of 3.1. Members did not appear to be any better informed than any other group – either in their perception of themselves or their comments in discussion.

Discussion on the vision of eGov focused on the potential as illustrated by non-Harrow experiences, and the fears of participants as to where eGov was not appropriate for the organisation. Some participants began the discussion element with the view that eGov was IT driven. However, this view rarely persisted as discussion continued. Others began with eGov being only relevant to the external communications function of the Council, but once again this view did not persist.

There appeared to be no shortage of examples of where eGov might improve services, either by facilitating communication/data recording etc within the organisation, or facilitating communication externally. Promoting local economic vitality appeared to be less well thought through, but even here participants had little difficulty in suggesting mechanisms for improvement when it was explicitly put to them. Many of these ideas derived from the experiences of staff and Members with using e services outside the Council, or from their experiences in previous employments.

Fears associated with eGov were extensive at all levels of the organisation. They included information overload, privacy and data-sharing issues, technological exclusion, inadequate budget or corporate skills to implement technological change, poor corporate, departmental and change planning, poor risk assessment, lack of teamwork and lack of consultation prior to the imposition from above of change. These fears stemmed in many cases from experiences of past change management processes within the authority, or in some cases current change management processes. Two positive examples of change were identified – the change to an automated telephone payments system across the authority, and the document imaging process within Exchequer services.

Despite these commonly expressed fears, there was no lack of enthusiasm, and a clear recognition of the need for change. Indeed innovative ideas for change were a common feature of both the middle management and front line staff groups, and a follow up email requesting 'quick wins' was very productive (see Appendix 4).

There was a shared strong political will across all parties to ensure the resources for eGov were available.

6.1.2. Analysis

There was a strong sense of the potential for eGov to transform services, renew local democracy, and, to a lesser extent, promote local economic vitality at all levels of the organisation. This derived from individuals' observation of the

changes in other organisations (e-banking, central government, web shopping etc) rather than from changes initiated within LBH.

The confidence which each group had in the capacity of Harrow to 'move with the times' in response to the changed technological environment varied significantly.

There were occasional examples of how individuals anticipated services within their department might change over the medium term. An example of this was the anticipated move to document imaging of plans within the planning department. Another was the use of laptops to record data at a client's home directly into a laptop or palmtop device.

There was no vision of the criteria that would underlie the implementation of eGov within Harrow, but rather an assumption that progress would be sporadic.

It was striking that at no stage did any participant, from the front-line staff up, identify how eGov fitted within their departmental plan. This would appear to indicate that departmental plans are not seen as a source of authority for most staff and Members in the planning process of the authority.

Freedom of information changes will necessitate greater controls over the recording, storage and retrieval of personal information. This of itself would require a step change in Harrow's ways of working, which in the past has often been dependent on personal knowledge and individual systems.

The statement by the leaders of all three main parties that they supported eGov, and recognised the need for a long term plan and supported funding stream to guarantee it, is indicative of a strong and shared importance being attached to eGov.

6.1.3. Conclusion

There is no shared vision across Harrow on what our goals for eGov should be in any of the three areas identified by Government. EGov is perceived as a Government, not a Harrow, agenda. We conclude that, without change, implementation of eGov is likely to be fragmented and haphazard.

We also conclude that departmental and corporate planning is lacking in authority. We are not able to conclude whether the plans themselves are poor, but only that they play little role in the motivation or direction of staff and Members' priorities for all groups that partook of this process.

Planning is perceived as an isolated procedure. It is separated from the implementation, monitoring and post-auditing of those plans.

Joint working with partners is not strong in the area of eGov.

There is an urgent need for the integration of eGov planning with the emerging Freedom of Information rights of individuals.

eGov has strong political support.

6.1.4. Recommendations

We strongly recommend the development of an eGov implementation plan for Harrow.

We strongly recommend the creation of an integrated Corporate Plan which sets out Harrow's corporate vision and the detailed principles that underlie more detailed plans. The eGov implementation plan, departmental plans and all other planning, budget and performance monitoring reports should integrate with the Corporate Plan.

We would recommend that plans should be the authority from which all action stems. Performance should be assessed in parallel with the published plans and this should include an evaluation of how plans have been implemented, monitored and reviewed post-implementation.

We suggest that Harrow's eGov plan:

1. states Harrow's vision for eGov, together with the mechanism to be adopted in translating this vision into departmental plans, and
2. identifies common 'critical success factors' to be reflected in departmental plans to ensure that departmental plans consider all three elements of the Government's eGov agenda.

We suggest that departmental plans should include a section on how that department will implement eGov, over what timescale, utilising what resources, and what outcomes are expected in terms of service delivery.

We would suggest that greater importance should be placed on eGov joint working/the achievement of eGov partner development.

We recommend that Scrutiny should include corporate planning in its planned budget scrutiny.

We would suggest that the eGov plan is integrated with plans to implement the Freedom of Information requirements so as to ensure that eGov solutions (and compromises) are compatible with forthcoming legal requirements associated with Freedom of Information.

We would suggest that a joint protocol on eGov be issued by the three Group leaders setting out the nature and extent of their shared vision and the mechanism for guaranteeing the funding for that vision.

7. KEY FINDINGS: ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

7.1. Communication

7.1.1. What We Found

Responses to the questionnaire relating to communication were poor (Q1 & 2) by all groups. Whether this is because there is little to communicate (see above), or that the mechanisms for communication are poor, is harder to judge. Examples were given of information that had been publicised on the Harrow Update not being disseminated through the organisation.

Clearly the fact that participants felt poorly informed about the Council's plans for eGov challenges our communications procedures in general. (See above, the score in the questionnaire for question 1 was between 3.1 and 4.5).

This observation is reinforced by question 2, where participants gave their perception on the extent the Council communicated with stakeholders. Here the response was between 2.5 and 3.2.

Whilst the CMT gave a score of 8.8 as the importance level for eGov, front-line staff gave 6.9, and non-Executive Members 7.4. This indicates a difference of opinion on the importance of this issue to the organisation, which was born out by the discussion groups.

A common perception amongst middle managers and front-line staff was that communication was 'a one way street', and that there was a lack of consultation prior to the implementation of a decision.

Participants were often critical of the website content. There appeared to be little perception of departmental ownership of website material.

7.1.2. Analysis

The discussion and responses to the questionnaire appear to indicate a lack of confidence in the communications processes within the authority. We find this puzzling, given the recent increase in the quantity of communications.

Perhaps the perception of poor communication has more to do with the nature of what is being communicated and the timing of that communication rather than with quantity. 'Unofficial' communication mechanisms seem at least as important as formal channels, and add to the feeling of being 'kept in the dark' by many staff.

The website is not seen as an area over which departments have control.

7.1.3. Conclusion

Communications within the organisation must improve if we are to facilitate planned change in a manner that facilitates team working.

The quantity of communication within the organisation is not the primary issue – many staff complained of information overload within their functions.

Thought must be given to quality and timing, as well as to the medium and quantity of that information. Action must be taken to create an authoritative medium through which relevant, reliable and timely information is distributed to all staff and Members on an appropriate basis.

A significant barrier to the more extensive use of the website by departments is their lack of control over updating/amending content.

7.1.4. Recommendations

We recommend that a corporate policy be drawn up, as part of the Corporate Plan, relating to timely communications within and external to the organisation. This plan should also address issues around the use and development of both the website and intranet.

We would suggest that the Harrow Update is used as a common vehicle for corporate communications, and:

1. continues to be issued every Monday.
2. is divided into a number of departmental pages, with 'hotlinks' from the front of the document to these departmental pages (to allow staff and Members to only look at those items that are of relevance to them).
3. is the 'official journal' for change management within the organisation – ie is seen as the authoritative source on what is happening within the organisation, and the mechanism whereby feedback and consultation takes place.
4. must meet extremely strict standards for the timely posting of departmental information by IT if this mechanism is to function effectively.
5. must be accompanied by corporate policy discouraging the use of alternative communication methods when communicating information that meets clearly defined criteria.

We would suggest that the management of website and intranet content – including the physical insertion and deletion – should be carried out within departments according to clear guidelines set corporately.

We would suggest that the intranet be used as the authoritative repository for corporate and departmental plans, plan implementation material and plan monitoring material.

We would also suggest that consideration is given to establishing an eGov discussion board on the intranet to provide the opportunity for staff to exchange views and put forward ideas for development. We would envisage this discussion forum being open to all members of staff who have signed up to take part and that responsibility for capturing/responding to ideas is clearly agreed before the board is launched.

7.2. Leadership/Patterns of Change

7.2.1. What We Found

Front-line staff frequently quoted examples of a lack of consultation, a lack of trust, an arbitrary approach to decision-making and a lack of corporate 'memory' regarding past mistakes. They acknowledged that this sometimes resulted from a lack of managerial resource. Managers who were responsible for change were accused of sometimes sacrificing other services to ensure the success of the latest project, rather than planning for change. There was little confidence in the Best Value process by front-line staff.

The perception from managerial levels was of 'firefighting' and inadequate resource to plan for change.

'Technological leadership' by IT was frequently criticised, although it was less clear whether this was because of a lack of resources, a lack of leadership, or for some other reason.

CMT and Members stressed the importance of Best Value as part of the change management process.

The lack of leadership extended beyond Harrow. Governmental leadership on data sharing, IT specifications and reasonable and consistent targets was heavily criticised.

7.2.2. Analysis

A common thread emerged of the Harrow approach to change. Whilst recognition of the need for change was universal, fear of change was also common often because of past experience or a lack of risk management skills.

All groups focused on the need for a 'champion' to initiate change. In front-line and middle manager groups, 'champion' led change has sometimes been associated with poor planning, repeated mistakes, the neglect of other services and little consultation prior to implementation. Member views were more mixed, although the 'charismatic' change model was recognised.

One participant observed that their previous authority had seen a large net benefit from a systematic structure, although he observed that a too systematic approach had lost some of the benefits of the renewal process (ie it had itself become a new orthodoxy).

Best Value has had a significant impact on the perceptions of CMT and Members, a more limited impact on managers, and little impact on front-line staff. This would appear to reflect a failure to implement meaningfully the 'consultation' element of Best Value.

7.2.3. Conclusion

Change management in Harrow would appear to be weak and heavily dependent on the competence of the 'champion' and their vision and implementation skills. Whilst a wholly systematic approach is resistant to change, Harrow has erred too far toward reliance on unsupported individual initiative in the change process.

Management skills would appear to be 'traditional' and hierarchical in their approach to staff management and motivation.

Consultation within the Best Value framework is not always meaningful at the front-line.

7.2.4. Recommendations

We strongly recommend that a more formal documented approach to planning for change be adopted.

We would suggest this includes the following steps:

1. identify the measurable objective of change in the context of the Corporate / departmental plan prior to implementation
2. identify and compare the change alternatives available to the authority prior to choosing between such alternatives
3. identify the systems and resource requirements, (including management resources required for change planning, creation and implementation training and other needs) prior to implementation
4. engage in consultation with those groups affected prior to implementation
5. include a comparison with other entities that have already implemented similar changes, and what their experiences were
6. be transparent during the process of change
7. involve an automatic post-implementation review of the process of change at a predetermined point after implementation, and that such reviews be reported on the Borough website and the departmental plan.

We recommend that the risk analysis undertaken as part of IEG2 be supplemented by an integrated approach to risk management within the Authority. This recommendation extends beyond eGov to management processes generally.

We recommend greater emphasis should be placed on formal consultation both of front-line staff and users within the Best Value process.

We suggest that Harrow's Corporate Plan identifies the organisational culture to which the authority is committed. We recommend that this should be a culture of mutual trust rather than hierarchy, innovation rather than a fear of change, and systematically planned, team-based and managed risk-taking to underpin competent leadership.

We suggest a local corporate 'invest to save / invest to share and save' scheme be developed whereby current resources (including provision for planning and change management) can be obtained now in exchange for clearly identified revenue savings in the future.

We suggest that active support for managers at all levels (for instance with seminars) continues to be developed and that this should focus on leadership, staff consultation and team working in the practical context of Harrow. This should include the opportunity for managers to feed back their own concerns and issues to their managers. Priority should be given to those managers facing or undergoing change.

7.3. Cross-Departmental and Partnership Working

7.3.1. What We Found

Three questions elicited a strong positive response from all groups:

1. How important do you think eGov is to Harrow?
2. How much scope do you think there is to improve cross-departmental working?
3. How much scope do you think there is to improve our partnership working?

'Silo' approach to departmental working was common, although some cross-departmental teams have been successful (The example of the implementation of a phone payments system was given).

Change in the allocation of resources between departments to facilitate efficiency savings was perceived as unusual.

7.3.2. Analysis

Clearly there is considerable scope for cross-departmental and partnership working. An example was given of the document imaging facilities in Exchequer Services being made available to other departments, and in particular planning.

There would appear to be little common corporate identity to which staff feel an allegiance. It might be argued that departmental working ensures that resource is devoted to the 'coal face'. However, it would appear that this has gone on so long that structural imbalances have resulted within the organisation.

The New Harrow Project is clearly one mechanism whereby existing departmental barriers can be challenged.

7.3.3. Conclusion

Mechanisms to facilitate cross-departmental working, cross-departmental budget transfer and innovation in ways of working must be encouraged – within the context of proper change management and the Corporate Plan.

7.3.4. Recommendations

We recommend that:

- 1. suitable incentives be established to encourage service centres (such as document imaging) offering eGov facilities associated with economies of scale / timely solutions to all departments.**
- 2. other measures, detailed in the body of this report, be considered to facilitate a sense of common purpose within the authority and to facilitate cross-departmental working.**

We would suggest the following methods to facilitate a sense of common purpose within the authority and cross-departmental working be considered:

1. better signage for both the public and staff within the Civic Centre and other Authority sites
2. a laminated A4 functional statement on each door in the Civic Centre.

7.4 Training

7.4.1 What We Found

There was little confidence in the organisation that Harrow is identifying eGov training needs, as evidenced by the answer to question 9 of the questionnaire.

No mention was made of an integrated approach to training by participants.

A participant drew attention to the training needs of the voluntary sector.

There was common agreement that training needs associated with eGov implementation were not being correctly identified within the authority.

7.4.2 Analysis

Training is addressed as an issue in departmental plans. Departmental plans are of varying importance to the running of departments.

There would appear to be little linkage between eGov training needs and service improvement.

Training within the voluntary sector and disadvantaged groups would improve service delivery, but would also address the 'strengthening economic regeneration' issue.

7.4.3 Conclusion

Critical success factors for identifying training needs should be identified.

7.4.4 Recommendations

We recommend that

- 1. the Corporate Plan should set out, in a structured way, the steps necessary to identify training needs in departmental plans;**
- 2. more specific criteria to identify training needs be identified in the Corporate eGov implementation plan;**
- 3. specific training needs continue to be identified in departmental plans, and that these should be linked to the criteria in the Corporate and eGov plans, and with measurable service improvements.**

We recommend that an eGov training plan be drawn up for the voluntary sector and disadvantaged groups, perhaps in partnership with the LSC, and that opportunities for supported training for voluntary organisations be publicised via the website.

7.5 Incentive and Monitoring Structures and Upgrade Procedures

7.5.1 What We Found

There was common agreement in the questionnaire (Q10-13) and the focus groups that the authority is highly risk averse, often did not capture good ideas nor share good practice, and did not undertake sufficient post-implementation reviews to identify successes or failures adequately.

Questions 10 – 13 focused on the ability of the Authority to capture ideas, take risks and learn from successes and failures. There was a common perception that we were poor in all these areas.

Front-line staff did not feel their ideas were valued or recognised. There was a perception that opportunities for advancement within the organisation were limited. Managerial success was perceived to be judged by their success at pushing through their own projects, regardless of the price paid by the organisation as a whole. There was little incentive to show initiative due to the lack of consultation, and a lack of delegation of budgets, along with the responsibility for decision making, to lower levels. Front-line staff also answered question 4 quite differently from the CMT in that they did not believe that eGov fitted easily with the 'Harrow way of doing things'.

There appeared to be a strong 'ideas' culture focused on problem solution and service enhancement, and many of these ideas were very positive. However, middle management perceived incentives to be toward piecemeal development (often in response to externally determined priorities), maintenance of or growth in departmental budgets, and control of information. The implementation of change appeared to rest heavily on the energy and commitment of the individual.

CMT also acknowledged that departmental leads on eGov were the norm. There was a perception that past technological underinvestment had left Harrow in a disadvantageous position.

No evidence was put forward of a link between budgeting and service performance monitoring. Performance monitoring appeared to be driven primarily by Government requirements or departmental concerns.

7.5.2 Analysis

Incentive and monitoring structures, like change management generally, do not appear to be led by Corporate criteria 'owned' by Harrow.

Systematic integrated financial and service performance monitoring structures in Harrow are weak.

The perception of front-line staff on the ability of the organisation to adapt to eGov is weak. This may reflect some cynicism on the ability of Harrow to adapt.

The poor record on delegation appears to reflect a lack of 'trust' in front-line staff in some areas.

Past low investment in IT in Harrow gives us an opportunity. Given the low capital value of the IT systems within Harrow, a radical approach to IT implementation may be

justified. Whilst little evidence was found that this was under consideration, strategically this is the approach that has been adopted by a number of other authorities.

7.5.3 Conclusion

eGov has a strong role to play in this area. However, eGov itself must be subject to sensible Corporate priorities and judged according to clearly defined service outcomes. There is little evidence that this is happening.

Management must earn the support of front-line staff in the implementation of change. Front-line staff must be valued more highly, and greater delegation and responsibility 'passed down the line', if we are to benefit from their active participation in the change process.

Greater resources must be devoted to identifying the IT and eGov choices facing the authority. These choices must be debated at the strategic level.

7.5.4 Recommendations

We recommend that a more formal documented approach to planning for change be adopted, as outlined above.

We recommend that the forthcoming investment in IT foreseen by the authority should be subject to the same change management processes as above.

8. FOLLOW UP

We intend to monitor the progress being made and are making provision for this in our work programme for 2003-04. We anticipate asking key officers and Members to attend our relevant meetings to discuss any work which is being undertaken.

9. LESSONS LEARNT FOR SCRUTINY

9.1. Introduction

Clearly this Scrutiny has been a success. In addition to informing the Council's position on e-government, the Review Group Members and supporting officers believe that the work undertaken has provided them with important and relevant experience of undertaking a scrutiny review through a peer-style process as well as honing our scrutiny skills.

9.2 What Worked

We found the pre-scoping day of particular value in developing a shared understanding and planning process and allowing an initial in-depth consideration of the options for the scope. In previous reviews we have not allowed ourselves this additional time at an early stage. We feel that starting with a blank page, rather than officer suggestions, with the time to explore issues in new ways with officers led to real and informed debate and resulted in strong Member-leadership of the process. The openness of the whole process was felt to support the group in agreeing the scope of the review. The use of a pre-scoping session is certainly an element of the process that we will be strongly recommending for future adoption.

The process of identifying specific foci for the review, and being continually brought back to these, taught us much in terms of securing effective performance.

We also learnt to accept that, given the peer-style nature of the review, we would not necessarily capture all the data which we would have liked to do in other circumstances – there inevitably needed to be a trade off between issues such as time and energy and the scope and focus of the review, the extent of the evidence base and the need to complete the job in hand, and what we might say and what will be heard. Testing the potential impact of our work was critical in seeking an area of review and a process where we could add real value.

As well as further developing our scrutiny skills, we also learnt a number of information gathering and data analysis techniques which we will be able to apply to future reviews.

The focus group approach, especially when combined with a 'vertical slice' approach to the focus groups, worked well. We found the direct contact with front-line staff particularly informative as Members have limited opportunities to exchange views on this basis. Staff also appeared to welcome the opportunity to enter into direct dialogue with us.

9.3 Signposts for Improvement: Resources and Procedures

Our experiences have highlighted the need to give far greater consideration at the outset to the identification of the resources necessary to undertake a review, including our own ability to meet the time demands of an intensive review process whilst maintaining our other commitments. A slightly larger group of Members would have been a valuable additional resource.

We recommend that scoping reports quantify the resources required in terms of Member and officer time in advance, and agree a timetable, dates and meeting times.

The limited resources available to us for the review were also a constraint. The availability of a dedicated room for the retention and display of resources and findings and for group meetings would not only have made a more accessible and effective base for our work but we feel would have facilitated our operation as a team.

We recommend that the Scrutiny Support Officer has the use of a dedicated office with facilities for the display of flipcharts, and other data collected during the scrutiny process.

Although we had established a process for communicating between ourselves during the tight review period, we would have benefited from meeting together more frequently to capture and share our findings as the review progressed and also to debate our recommendations in greater depth. The time available for deliberating on the data collected and for drafting the report were highly challenging. Whilst virtual communications are vital in such a process, meetings are necessary to ensure the full participation of all in the process.

To give ourselves more time to consider the thrust of our report and to refine further our conclusions and recommendations we decided, fairly late in the process, that we would allow our timetable for reporting to Cabinet to slip by a month. By doing this we felt that we were also increasing our opportunities to influence decisions during the informal feedback sessions with key officers and Members. The scope of our review was, to some extent, dictated by the timescale set.

We recommend building in a much longer period between the pre-scoping session and the commencement of the review itself in future to facilitate planning and the identification of various data sources.

We recommend that a meeting is timetabled for deliberating on the data collected (which we did) and for deliberating on the report in draft form and reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny (which we did not).

Finally, the effectiveness of the process would have been improved if we had, at the outset, identified a lead Member/Chair of the Review Group rather than letting this evolve as the process developed. Early clarity about whom would be responsible for drafting the report would also have allowed the report writer to allocate time for this.

9.4 Signposts for Improvement: Participation

This scrutiny would have benefited greatly from the participation of focus groups drawn from our partners, and from the general public.

We recommend that wherever possible scrutiny seek to incorporate at least a sample of interested partners and the public into the scrutiny process.

9.5 Conclusion

There will inevitably be further lessons to learn as we go through the process of reporting back our findings and presenting our results. These will be captured later in the year when we meet again to review the process as a whole.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. Harrow's Vision of eGov

We strongly recommend the development of an eGov implementation plan for Harrow.

We strongly recommend the creation of an integrated Corporate Plan which sets out Harrow's corporate vision and the detailed principles that underlie more detailed plans. The eGov implementation plan, departmental plans and all other planning, budget and performance monitoring reports should integrate with the Corporate Plan.

We would recommend that plans should be the authority from which all action stems. Performance should be assessed in parallel with the published plans and this should include an evaluation of how plans have been implemented, monitored and reviewed post-implementation.

We suggest that Harrow's eGov plan:

1. states Harrow's vision for eGov, together with the mechanism to be adopted in translating this vision into departmental plans, and
2. identifies common 'critical success factors' to be reflected in departmental plans to ensure that departmental plans consider all three elements of the Government's eGov agenda.

We suggest that departmental plans should include a section on how that department will implement eGov, over what timescale, utilising what resources, and what outcomes are expected in terms of service delivery.

We would suggest that greater importance should be placed on eGov joint working / the achievement of eGov partner development.

We recommend that Scrutiny should include corporate planning in its planned budget scrutiny.

We would suggest that the eGov plan is integrated with plans to implement the Freedom of Information requirements so as to ensure that eGov solutions (and compromises) are compatible with forthcoming legal requirements associated with Freedom of Information.

We would suggest that a joint protocol on eGov be issued by the three Group leaders setting out the nature and extent of their shared vision and the mechanism for guaranteeing the funding for that vision.

10.2. Organisational Change - Communication

We recommend that a corporate policy be drawn up, as part of the Corporate Plan, relating to timely communications within and external to the organisation. This plan should also address issues around the use and development of both the website and intranet.

We would suggest that the Harrow Update is used as a common vehicle for corporate communications, and:

1. continues to be issued every Monday.
2. is divided into a number of departmental pages, with 'hotlinks' from the front of the document to these departmental pages (to allow staff and Members to only look at those items that are of relevance to them).
3. is the 'official journal' for change management within the organisation – ie is seen as the authoritative source on what is happening within the organisation, and the mechanism whereby feedback and consultation takes place.
4. must meet extremely strict standards for the timely posting of departmental information by IT if this mechanism is to function effectively.
5. must be accompanied by corporate policy discouraging the use of alternative communication methods when communicating information that meets clearly defined criteria.

We would suggest that the management of website and intranet content – including the physical insertion and deletion – should be carried out within departments according to clear guidelines set corporately.

We would suggest that the intranet be used as the authoritative repository for corporate and departmental plans, plan implementation material and plan monitoring material.

We would also suggest that consideration is given to establishing an eGov discussion board on the intranet to provide the opportunity for staff to exchange views and put forward ideas for development. We would envisage this discussion forum being open to all members of staff who have signed up to take part and that responsibility for capturing/responding to ideas is clearly agreed before the board is launched.

10.3. Organisational Change – Leadership/Patterns of Change

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We would suggest this includes the following steps:

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4. engage in consultation with those groups affected prior to implementation
5. include a comparison with other entities that have already implemented similar changes, and what their experiences were.
6. be transparent during the process of change
7. involve an automatic post-implementation review of the process of change at a predetermined point after implementation, and that such reviews be reported on the Borough website and the departmental plan.

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10.5. Organisational Change - Training

We recommend that

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We recommend that an eGov training plan be drawn up for the voluntary sector and disadvantaged groups, perhaps in partnership with the LSC, and that opportunities for supported training for voluntary organisations be publicised via the website.

10.6. Organisational Change - Incentive and Monitoring Structures and Upgrade Procedures

We recommend that a more formal documented approach to planning for change be adopted, as outlined above.

We recommend that the forthcoming investment in IT foreseen by the authority should be subject to the same change management processes as above.