

Highlights from the work of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-committee

Overview of work undertaken

This year has been another interesting year for the Environment and Economy sub-committee. We have had the opportunity again to work in some extremely interesting areas examining issues that have allowed Scrutiny to contribute more broadly to the achievements of the Council.

Among other responsibilities, the sub-committee has:

- **Had a presentation of the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets.** LPSA are an agreement between local councils and the Government, aimed at improving services within the Local Authority as well as meeting public expectations. Twelve targets were agreed to for the Council – five of which were within the boundaries of the Environment and Economy Sub-Committee. Due to the cross cutting nature of some of the indicators, Strengthening Communities Sub Committee was invited to attend this presentation. Adequate monitoring of these targets is important as if met will bring government funding and improved services for the community.
- **Considered environmental issues in the area including local flooding and green belt management.** The committee considers a range of environmental issues each year and demonstrates one of the many ways scrutiny can contribute to improving the environment for Harrow. We will be reviewing the Green Belt management report once it has been issued.
- **Completed a scrutiny review on Household Waste Management.** This review has yielded one of the key areas of impact for the Environment and Economy Sub-committee this year. Results from this review will contribute to the efforts of the council to minimise waste, while maximising our ability to reach recycling targets.
- Received a progress report on the Council's action plan relating to the **Housing Best Value Review**. The Committee is to monitoring the Council's progress against this action plan to ensure targets are being met.
- Considered items **referred to it from Cabinet**.
- Considered a referral from the **Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum** regarding the preservation and management of trees in the area. The outcome of this discussion will see a review of the Tree Preservation Orders in the area in question which will be submitted to the Committee at a later date.
- Continually monitored progress toward the establishment of the **Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)** and raised questions surrounding the Council's decision to move away from this option.

Scrutiny played a valuable role in questioning and checking the Council decision in this area.

- Considered the implications of the new **Licensing Act 2003**. The committee noted the potential work and time pressures which would be on the Licensing Panel (established to manage changes arising from the Act) and recommended the panel be convened quickly to ensure adequate timeframes to make quality decisions regarding this policy and should investigate whether to pay an allowance to panel members.
- Monitored the implementation of the **Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy**.
- Commented on the **Transport Local Implementation Plan**.

Key Areas of Impact

As highlighted in our Annual Report last year, the issue of waste management has been of high importance for scrutiny this year. The Review of Household Waste aimed to progress the initiatives toward meeting or surpassing the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) for recycling, as well as identifying new initiatives to further expand recycling and composting in the borough. The review group consisted of Councillor's and a co-optee from local environmental group Agenda 21.

A substantial amount of research was conducted as part of this review. Much good practice information was gathered through the group's visits to other local authorities. Daventry, Bexley and Barnet were all visited to learn more about their collection processes and communication tools with a view to using this information to help Harrow increase its own recycling and composting rates. Input from residents was received through two separate forums - at the Harrow Show and from the Harrow Partnership with Older People (POP) Panel. The committee also engaged with members from the workforce including recycling officers and shop stewards. A visit to the Greater London Authority was also made to help understand how the Recycle for London campaign can be tied in with Harrow's initiatives. Finally a visit following the collection rounds and to the Harefield waste site were made for background research.

Helpful information was received from all of these forums about education programs, collection routes, promotional materials, practical issues as well as suggestions for how to educate residents. The input gained from each of these forums has been invaluable in informing recommendations from the report. The subcommittee will present its report to Cabinet in April and will be closely monitoring the effect any recommendations have on waste management in Harrow.

A review has also been undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee of the roll out of Public Realm Maintenance services to Areas 2 &

3. This has formed a case study to the second phase of the O&S review of the New Harrow Project. The Chair of this Sub-Committee led the case study, which also involved Ward Councillors as well as representatives of the local community and businesses. Further information on this case study is included in the section of this report that provides highlights of the recent work of the O&S Committee.

Key Issues for 2005/06

In the next year, the Environment and Economy sub-committee will continue to examine areas of concern to residents. Areas for review have been canvassed from the public, from council officers and from Councillors.

In particular, consideration will be given to:

- Local traffic and road issues;
- Maintenance of parks and public areas;
- Ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003;
- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations from the Scrutiny Review into Household Waste.
- Monitoring housing issues;
- Reviewing management of the Green Belt; and
- Monitoring progress towards Local Development Framework.

Further items for the work programme will be considered in the near future.

Councillor Blann Chair, Environment and Economy Sub-committee

Statistics:

Committee meetings: 4 ordinary

Working group meetings: 0

In-depth reviews: 1

Review meetings: 3 review meetings

Visits/informal meetings: 4 visits, 1 public consultation (Harrow Show), 3 meetings with stakeholders

Attendance by Portfolio Holder (number of meetings): 3

Statutory items considered: 2