

REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date:	28 February 2012
Subject:	Scrutiny Lead Member Report
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap, Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	All
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The report accompanies the reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to consider the reports from the Scrutiny Lead Members and agree the actions proposed therein.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

This report outlines details of the work of the Scrutiny Lead Members for Corporate Effectiveness and Sustainable Development and Enterprise. The report also includes the note of a meeting of the Children and Young People's leads, the chairman of the Performance and Finance committee and the Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee which considered the educational achievements and attendance of children looked after.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report

Performance Issues

There are no performance issues associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

There is no environmental impact associated with this report

Risk Management Implications

There are no risks associated with this report.

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

This report outlines the activities of the scrutiny lead councillors; it makes no proposals to change service delivery.

Corporate Priorities

The Scrutiny Lead Members' responsibilities cover all areas of the council's activity.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background

Papers

Contact: Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny, 020 8420 9387, lynne.margetts@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBERS' REPORT: **CORPORATE EFFECTIVENESS**

Lead Members: Councillors Jerry Miles and Tony Ferrari

The lead members met on 16th January 2012.

Attendees

- Councillor Jerry Miles, Scrutiny Policy Lead Member
- Councillor Tony Ferrari, Scrutiny Performance Lead Member
- Julie Alderson, Interim Corporate Director, Finance
- Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
- Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny

Customer Contact

All customer contact is now routed via Access Harrow apart from Children's Safeguarding services. The Integrated Targeted Services project has introduced a triage system for children's services front desk which stands outside of this model. Discussions are taking place regarding rolling out the Access Harrow technology to the service but there is no business case for this as it will not deliver any further cost reductions.

The Adults Services helpline, CSO in Adults, planning and registrars have all been incorporated into Access Harrow over the summer, this is expected to deliver a saving of £1m by taking 30% out of all of the teams. Cllr Ferrari queried whether the motivation was the reduction of 30% or whether the realignment of functions has delivered this. Tom clarified that a blueprint had been developed and telephony had been installed to help assess the demand. However he commented that the 30% savings had been achieved with improved management of the team and that further productivity improvements were expected via cross-skilling and CRM, the use of the telephony system means that there is tighter management control over performance and staff can be supported to improve their performance across the board in order to deliver the savings. He confirmed that the 30% saving has been taken out of the budgets. He also advised that analysis of the peaks and troughs of demand has meant a more strategic use of resources is being achieved, though this is still to be done across the services which have just been brought into Access Harrow.

Tom advised that Access Harrow is largely hitting the 90% target:

Target	December Performance
90% of calls answers in 30seconds	93%
Less than 5% of calls abandoned	3%
80% of calls resolved at point of first contact	90%

However, Tom also acknowledged that December was actually a quieter month for Access Harrow-52,000 calls compared with 65,000 calls in November.

Cllr Ferrari commented that whilst the performance of Access Harrow is commendable, he feels there is something missing in the Council's customer service 'jigsaw'. He feels that the feedback loop to services may not be as effective as it should be and is concerned that having taken the access issues away from services, we have also taken away responsibility and interest in proactively addressing issues. He feels that the council should be using information to fix the fundamental problems which residents call about in order to pre-empt their calls. Tom felt that this should be addressed by the analysis of 'avoidable contact' and agreed to provide the

corporate effectiveness leads with further advice as to the definition of avoidable contact. He also felt that this is being done and cited a number of examples where intelligence has been used to fix problems promptly and for the future – e.g. analysis of calls during the snow disruption showed that residents' key concern was the impact on refuse collection and that information on the web site would help with this and, thus, reduce calls. Cllr Ferrari remains concerned that the council undertaken sufficient, and sufficiently detailed analysis of service by service contact.

Cllr Ferrari also commented that the target should be 'call reduction' not just avoidable contact and he felt that the cost per call could go up as the only calls the council receives are the most complex. He feels that there are some management issues in this, the Director of Customer Service and Business Transformation is incentivised to maximise calls. Tom refuted this, it is clear that there must be a 26% reduction in costs and therefore calls must be reduced and migrated to other channels.

Human Resources

Tom advised that there are upward pressures on sickness absence, though the number are volatile. He commented that there is a lack of consistency in sickness management though the process is clearly defined.

Appraisals compliance is slightly down, predominantly in Community and Environment where the 'start of year' appraisals were not completed because of the public realm reorganisation.

The new resourcing contract for agency staff is now in place and this means that all agency staff must be recruited via this contract.

Tom advised that both Chief Executive's and Housing Departments had received silver Investors in People accreditation.

Performance

Performance on BV8 – payment of undisputed invoices – is down in respect of invoices to large organisations, though the council is making prompt payment in respect of small, local companies. Julie commented that in her view, large companies should not be paid promptly and the councillors agreed with this approach.

The council is anticipating a large Ofsted inspection later this year.

There is still no means of benchmarking customer satisfaction in the absence of the place survey.

A permanent Borough Emergency Command and Control room has been set up.

My Harrow account has been re-launched.

The upgrade from Groupwise/Novell to Outlook is planned for April/May

Finance

At periods 6 and 7 the council had been anticipating an overspend but this has now been resolved and a small underspend is anticipated from the projections in period 8. Julie commented that this reversal is due in part as a result of the spending protocol and some use of contingency and reserves. There remain risks in terms of the outturn from the delivery of savings, particularly in adults' services.

Julie advised, that following a number of representations from scrutiny councillors, she is now monitoring performance of savings proposals on a monthly basis

A significant underspend is also anticipated on the capital budget. Julie is discouraging the anticipation of rollover of budgets not spent in year and, via the new capital budget assessment process is urging that unspent budgets are re-considered under this process – of £16m underspent in year, £13m is part of the bids for next year. This means that the capital budget is set to decrease. The 12/13 budget is prepared, along with indicative budgets for the following two years, which have been pitched at sustainable level of financing costs.

Transformation Priority Initiatives Fund has been used prudently in anticipation of potential overspends and to support the redundancy bill going forward. There is £1/2m remaining in this fund and a further £400k in the contingencies fund.

For Action

- Tom to provide information with regard to the determination of 'avoidable contact'
- The areas to continue to be monitored

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporate Effectiveness Leads will take place on 7th March

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER: EDUCATION AND ATTENDANCE

18 January 2012

Attendees:

- Councillor Sue Anderson, Chair, Performance and Finance (P&F) Scrutiny sub-committee
- Councillor Paul Osborn, Vice-Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor Christine Bednell, Children's Scrutiny Lead Member
- Councillor Krishna James, Children's Scrutiny Lead Member
- Gail Hancock, Divisional Director, Safeguarding and Family Support
- Catherine Halsall, Virtual Headteacher
- David Harrington, Service Manager, Service Performance
- Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer

Apologies:

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane, Vice-Chair, Performance and Finance Scrutiny sub-committee

NOTES

1. Welcome and introductions

Councillor Anderson chaired the meeting and welcomed officers and Members. In the course of the introductions, Councillor Bednell advised that she is the vice-chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Councillor James advised that she is chair of the School Placement Admissions Panel.

The Divisional Director welcomed the opportunity to meet with Members, which was timely given the recent changes in Children's Services. The new operating model (NOM) had now reached the implementation phase, with go-live scheduled for next month. The Virtual Headteacher is the permanent Head for all children looked after (CLA) by the council. She will be taking the lead on co-ordinating activities.

2. Children looked after – attendance

The Service Manager, Service Performance introduced a paper on attendance at school. The Department for Education (DfE) has introduced a new methodology for the reporting of Children Looked After (CLA) attendance. Data is returned in arrears; 2009/10 data was released in December 2011.

DfE uses the unique pupil number (UPN) to calculate absence, so this excludes pupils without a school place. CLA sometimes miss school *before* a place has been allocated to them. The council is therefore focusing on those who miss 25 days of schools regardless of whether or not they are on roll. There is now no national comparator data for this indicator; when it was last published in 2009 the England average was 12%, with Harrow at 20%.

Local monitoring is more robust, as it focuses on the percentage of sessions missed, thereby enabling the absence to be shown as it builds up, allowing appropriate action to be taken.

3. Children looked after – exclusions

No CLA have been permanently excluded since 2009/10. There have been six fixed term exclusions in the first three months of the 2011/12 school year. For exclusions, there is no clear pattern with regard to whether CLA are attending school either in-borough or out-of-borough.

4. Children looked after – achievement

In 2010/11, ten of the Year 11 cohort of 19 CLA took GCSE exams. Of the nine who did not take exams, six were at special schools, one was in hospital due to serious mental illness and two were missing from care. Key Stage 2 performance was broadly similar.

Members were advised that some CLA have taken 'A' levels and gone on to university, and that information on achievement was provided in more detail to the Corporate Parenting Panel. Such achievement was also recognised at the CLA achievement awards.

A Member commented that it would be helpful to see the progress of CLA throughout and expressed concern that CLA could suffer poverty of aspiration. The Divisional Director stressed that her service knows all CLA individually; they are in significant need, face challenging circumstances and there are clear reasons why the results are as they are.

The Service Manager added that the difference between CLA achievement and statistical neighbours/the England average could not be fully explained, but that the rate of CLA per population was low, at half the national average. This was partly due to preventative work, but was also affected by family make-up, local high aspirations, and good local schools.

A high proportion of Harrow's CLA population are teenagers, coming into care at a late stage. A Member agreed that this made it more difficult to have impact.

The Virtual Headteacher commented that the Year 11 cohort is too small to make many meaningful statistical statements; 5% represented one child. The key question is what the starting point is; was the Year 11 performance what was *expected* given the start point? A Member commented that this was similar to the concept of 'added value'. This was something the Virtual Headteacher hoped to look at in future; was university expected or did it represent a huge move forward for the child in question? Other achievements such as vocational qualifications or apprenticeship also needed to be reflected. A Member commented that he regarded attendance as a proxy; the Virtual Headteacher agreed that attendance did affect grades. The factor with greatest impact on attendance is the stability of the care placement. Placement moves could significantly affect attendance.

With regard to Personal Education Plans (PEPs), about 70% were completed and up to date. While this needed to be improved, the Virtual Headteacher stressed the importance of the quality of the PEP as well as its completion. A good PEP should include basic information about the child, their educational history (ideally from pre-school onwards), their school record (such as teacher assessment), target setting and details of resources and support to achieve those targets. It should also be monitored and regularly reviewed.

5. Future plans

A Member sought further detail on future plans to address performance. The Divisional Director advised that over the past three years there had been three part-time virtual headteachers who had committed one day a week to the role alongside serving as heads of their own schools. While there had been some achievement and lessons learned, it was felt that a step-change was required to improve the level of challenge provided. By making the Virtual Headteacher post into a part-time role held by one person the intention is to start operating the service like a school in its own right. As such, the Virtual

Headteacher's new team includes a PEP co-ordinator, a dedicated CLA education welfare officer (EWO), a Connexions personal adviser and a school nurse practitioner. The Virtual Headteacher is in the process of undertaking a six week review and devising an action plan.

A Member enquired whether the council had any information on the educational achievement of children after adoption and was advised that while the Local Authority has no role after successful adoption some national research would have been undertaken. The Divisional Director added that most of Harrow's CLA are in the older age bracket, mainly because the council has been so successful in adopting younger children; the most successful adoptions take place between the ages of birth to seven.

The Service Manager commented that targets were set for individual CLA but that the council was not now required to submit any information to DfE. There were opportunities for a better understanding of the cohort.

The Divisional Director concluded that the Virtual Headteacher would be reporting on her preliminary plan to the Corporate Parenting Panel along with a performance scorecard for Members' consideration.

A Member advised that he considered that attendance by session was of the most interest to Members, in addition to the "25 days missed" target. He also expressed interest in the numbers without a school place as well as the average wait and longest wait. On the latter, the Divisional Director responded that the provision of a school place was not totally within the council's gift. The Virtual Headteacher added that problems were more likely to arise where a child required a place outside of the usual entry points; there was still some work to be done to win 'hearts and minds'. With regard to sessions missed, the 'Welfare Call' telephone system enables the tracking of daily attendance and provides a cumulative attendance report per child. This was important because missed sessions could very quickly accumulate. Changes such as the co-location of Children's Services staff on the second floor of the Civic Centre would help facilitate closer working between teams.

With regard to visiting out-of-borough schools attended by CLA, the Virtual Headteacher stressed that her early thought had been that the purpose of a visit would be partly to do with establishing the presence of the service and to demonstrate that support is available. A Member added that the essence was that the service was able to access information and input at the earliest possible stage. Half of the CLA cohort is schooled in-borough, with the other half out-of-borough; the majority of out-of-borough CLA is schooled in neighbouring boroughs, with only 20-30 further afield. Those further away are generally attending residential special education. The council has a policy of only placing children in institutions rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

6. Next steps

It was agreed that the scrutiny Members be provided with the quarterly report to the Corporate Parenting Panel, including performance monitoring. Monthly monitoring information was also requested.

SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER REPORT
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE

NOTE OF THE SCRUTINY LEAD MEMBER BRIEFING
24 JANUARY 2012

Lead Members: Councillors Anderson and Wright

PLACE SHAPING BRIEFING – PROPERTY AND DISPOSAL

Attendees

- Councillor Sue Anderson, Scrutiny Performance Lead, SDE
- Councillor Stephen Wright, Scrutiny Policy Lead, SDE
- Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Property and Major Contracts Portfolio Holder
- Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director, Place Shaping
- Phil Loveland-Cooper, Head of Corporate Estate
- Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer

Introduction

The briefing had been arranged to allow further discussion of the Place Shaping Service Plan 2011-14, with specific focus on property and disposals.

Place Shaping Capital Programme 2011/12 to 2015/16

The Corporate Director presented the Place Shaping Capital Programme to Members. The Corporate Director advised that town centre development is to be supported through planning gain; in effect s106 agreements will be replaced by Harrow's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which will help to capture resource to help the town centre to keep pace with delivery of the Heart of Harrow.

The programme also reflected emerging change regarding capital expenditure. Up until 2009, the capital programme had been used relatively freely; as a result of accounting rule changes, and the Council's own need to reduce capital expenditure the programme had been scaled back.

Members and officers discussed specific projects within the programme.

Civic Centre Consolidation

This is a three year programme, which commenced in 2011/12. It is cash limited to £2.5m. It will lead to Children's Services staff being based on the second floor, as well as further Access Harrow adjustments to enable the re-location of the Pinner Road reception. Additional plans include improvements to the lower ground floor such as improved shower facilities and storage for personal belongings (for example motorcycle helmets).

It is intended that the majority of the Council's office space will be provided in Civic 1 by the end of March 2014. The investment currently undertaken means that Civic Centre has a ten year shelf life from April 2011.

Civic Centre Site Development

A Master Plan is being developed for the entire site of c. 11 acres, with the intention to create a plan which is capable of phased development, with the northern half of the site being developed first. One of the significant challenges will be the reduction of parking by as much as 50%.

The Civic Centre site is being taken forward as part of the development of the 'four strategic sites' programme (Civic Centre, Gayton Road, Greenhill Car Park and Byron).

Evaluation of the development of the four sites is to be undertaken along with consideration of the most appropriate delivery model. For example, each site could be developed individually or as part of a joint venture.

Feasibility exercises for the Civic Centre site, show, for example, that the site had high public transport accessibility. Plans for a large scale food store, for example, have been discounted; while there would be a high commercial return, the planning context would be very challenging.

The 'four strategic sites' programme will include the re-provisioning of the leisure centre and additional cultural facilities in the centre of Harrow, though the latter is not without commercial challenges.

Mobile and flexible working

A facilitator of future substantial office footprint reductions will be e-enabled flexible working. Detailed proposals are being developed for consideration by Cabinet. A briefing for scrutiny has been arranged for 22 February.

With regard to parking, there will be consultation on parking charges for all. The intention will be to eventually reach a rate that discourages daytime parking

Capital and revenue resources will be required to implement the change to flexible working. The project has been costed over 10 years, and would require £7.3m revenue and capital for a benefit of £10.2m. There is a challenging savings target from year 2.

Staff would adopt one of three broad types: fully flexible, 50% office/50% flexible and 100% office based. The likely desk ratio would be ten people to five or six desks.

Adopting e-enabled flexible working would then facilitate co-location with other public services in the longer term.

Land acquisition

This had been included in the 2011/12 plan as there was potential for the Council to acquire sites adjacent to key strategic sites to create a more comprehensive development solution to achieve a greater capital return. It is understood that the capital resource allocation will be managed in a flexible way and utilised in response to market opportunities. It is further intended that that the payback period will be relatively short as it is linked to site development contracts.

Pinner Park Farm

The Council has been in discussions for considerable time with the 'tenant farmer' in connection with the agricultural lease for the site. A rent review is underway. The administration is keen to develop a city farm for educational and cultural purposes. Pinner Park Farm is a possible site. The site is a key strategic site for Harrow. There are also decaying listed buildings on site for which the Council has some responsibility as landlord. The site is also in the Green Belt and has good accessibility.

Disposals

For 2011/12 there is a disposals cash target of £11.79m. This has been reduced to £7.254m as a result of the decision to defer the disposal of Amner Lodge and car park subsequent to the issuing of a planning consent.

Members and officers discussed advantages and disadvantages of disposals. Capital receipts can be used to pay off borrowing or finance capital expenditure. As part of the revenue budget process a capital receipt target is agreed annually. The benefit of disposal is not felt until the following financial year when the revenue impact is realised.

The Council is required to restate the value of its assets annually for the General Fund (GF) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). There is a rolling 5 year programme of review for the GF and the reviewed 'slice' is applied. If capital expenditure alters the value of assets this is also reflected.

The Council's property assets are valued at £1.6bn. Stock resource accounting means that a factor is applied to reflect that HRA stock is occupied by secure tenants.

Housing

The Council's target is to deliver c. 6,000 homes by 2026. The Core Strategy contains plans for the delivery of 6-7,000 homes.

Responsibility for delivering affordable housing is held by the planning authority. The Core Strategy (in conformity with the London Plan) has an overall target for supply, including the proportion that should be affordable. The affordable proportion target is 40%, but viability is dependent on individual sites. Where developers are also required to contribute to infrastructure the proportion has been around 30%.

The infrastructure development plan also highlights the need for amenity space and facilities such as schools; development cannot be considered in isolation.

The Council must also balance commercial return with the Council's community leadership role. The following examples were discussed:

- Stanmore – part of the benefit to the Council was in cash, part in the nomination rights on social housing, as well as enhancement of the district centre (for example the addition of a premium retailer and so on);
- Mill Farm – while there was no capital receipt, the benefit was that the Council secured nomination rights, additional housing units and modern new homes;
- Buckingham Road – staff working at the site were transferred to the Civic Centre or to Neighbourhood Resource Centres. This freed up the site, allowing housing to be provided. It also reduced revenue requirements, produced a capital receipt and reduced the repairs and maintenance required.

Academies

Assets have been transferred to academies on a long lease (125 years). The assets will continue to be re-valued annually on the anniversary of the transfer date (1 August 2011).

Next steps

A briefing on the mobile and flexible working project has been arranged for 22 February 2012.