

# Policy Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

## 2007/8



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## **Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee**



Cllr Richard Lewis (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr Brian Stead (Vice Chairman)

Cllr John Hensley

Cllr Elizabeth Kemp

Cllr Michael Markham

Cllr Sid Garg

Cllr Robin Sansarpuri

The Committee is chaired by Cllr Richard Lewis and is responsible for the policy overview role for a broad array of Council services provided by the Council's Finance & Resources Group and Deputy Chief Executive's Office (DCEO). These are primarily strategic policy and internal functions such as finance, property, personnel, legal services, ICT, economic development, and equalities and diversity.

### **Voluntary Sector Grants**

This review examined the support the Council gives five local organisations, assessing their performance and how the Council can ensure grants give value for money. We also looked at how these organisations contribute to community cohesion and made a series of recommendations which Cabinet agreed to strengthen partnership working.

### **Community Cohesion Action Plan**

Our second major review identified issues and challenges for Council services and made a number of specific proposals. We examined several Council initiatives and heard from the Connecting Communities Black and Minority Ethnic Minority Forum and the Hillingdon Inter-Faith Network. We confirmed that the Council has a key role in promoting Community Cohesion and the need for Members to challenge myths.

### **Member's Personal Development Working Group**

The Group that we set up in April 2007 reviewed best practice elsewhere with a view to building on our existing strengths. A key principle is that Members should decide on their own development priorities. Cabinet agreed the Group's recommendations including an improved Yearbook, a Member Personal Development Folder, a £30k budget and a Cabinet Member taking lead responsibility (Cllr Douglas Mills has taken on this role).

### **Other work**

The Committee undertook a short review of the reliability of Population Estimates for Hillingdon, had officer presentations on Tourism in Hillingdon and work of the Corporate Communications Team. We also reviewed Performance Reports and Budget proposals.

### **Looking Ahead to 2008/09**

The Committee suggests Business Continuity and Police Effectiveness / the Policing of the Borough as possible review topics for next year.

## **Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee**



Cllr Brian Crowe (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr John Hensley (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Judith Cooper

Cllr Judy Kelly

Cllr Peter Curling

Cllr Anita Smart

Cllr Edward Lavery

Representative Members for Education issues:

Anthony Little, Roman Catholic representative

Church of England representative vacant

3 Vacancies for Parent Governor representatives

The Committee is chaired by Cllr Brian Crowe and is responsible for the policy overview role in relation to education, schools, the early years service, the youth service, and social care services for children and young people.

### **Hillingdon's Approach to the Delivery of an Extended Service for Children and Families – Children's Centres**

In our review we sought to review the Local Authority's strategy for Extended Schools and Children's Centres. The Committee took evidence from the lead consultant working on the Children's Centre Capital Programme and various Council officers. A visit was also made to several children's centres in Acton and Ealing to examine examples of best practise. Cabinet agreed our recommendations in December.

### **Meeting the Needs of Troubled Young People**

The Committee's second main review this year was on 'Meeting the Needs of Troubled Young People'. We received evidence from the Training and Development Agency on national and regional strategies and from our youth services and Connexions. Another key element of the review was providing feedback on the Hayes and Harlington Targeted Youth Support Pilot. Cabinet to consider in the next few months.

### **Other work**

We have also:

- Commented on the Schools Standards Report, Children's Trust Arrangements and Building Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Considered the Council's 14 to 19 Strategy and the ongoing work on Marketing the Youth Service
- Reviewed Performance Reports for Education and Children's Services Group and scrutinised their Budget proposals
- Received reports on the Integrated Children's System, Arrangements for Monitoring the Quality of Case Recording and Compliance with Procedures in Children and Families Services

## **Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee**



Cllr Shirley Harper-O'Neill (Chairman)

*Other Members of the Committee*

Cllr Graham Horn (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Allan Kauffman

Cllr Janet Duncan

Cllr Janet Gardner

Cllr Andrew Retter

Cllr Kay Willmott-Denbeigh

The Committee is chaired by Cllr Shirley Harper-O'Neill and is responsible for the policy overview role for a diverse range of Council services provided by the Council's Environment & Consumer Protection and Planning & Community Services Groups. These services include libraries, leisure facilities, community safety, highways, planning, waste management, trading standards and others central to residents' quality of life.

The Committee has had a busy – and successful – second year completing three in-depth reviews:

### **Highways Maintenance**

Comparing performance on highways maintenance with two nearby Councils, taking the public's views via an online survey and Hillingdon People article and carrying out a tour of roads, the Committee found a good service on A and B roads but low spending on estate roads holding down standards and residents' satisfaction. After reporting to the Cabinet, £700,000 was added to the 2008/9 highways maintenance budget. Cabinet also accepted recommendations for better communication and publicity of achievements such as reduced accidents and trials of a new recycled plastic 'Enviro Kerb'; moving to a 'clearer highways' policy with less street furniture, road markings and signs; and asking both residents and Councillors to feedback on the quality of maintenance work.

### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

This review covered both the overall strategy for consultations and specific community engagement with environmental services. Advice was taken on building a successful consultation strategy from City of Westminster Council (a leading authority in this field). Street Champions, Chrysalis Grant recipients and those involved with "Streets Ahead" environmental action days were consulted about the quality of engagement and the environmental action taken as a result. Ways of taking forward consultation and engagement were identified and will be reported to the Cabinet in June 2008 in a combined report with the following review.

### **Cleanliness of the Environment**

This review looked at whether changing the way resources are used might achieve higher standards for residents and improved ENCAMS survey ratings (these are used for cleanliness performance indicators). This is timely as the Council has approved extra

funding for street cleaning in 2008/9. The Committee have already asked the Cabinet Member for Environment to consider how the Council can respond to residents helping to keep Hillingdon tidy, for example, via a reward scheme for those organizing regular litter picking, and by providing bags for litter, gloves and litter-picking tongs. Further recommendations for improving cleanliness will go to the Cabinet in June 2008.

### **Other work**

The Committee has monitored the performance of the Council's Environment & Consumer Protection and Planning and Community Services Groups, and commented on the budget proposals for these services. It took part in consultations on the West London Transport Strategy and on Heathrow expansion and submitted comments to the Cabinet on fourteen Forward Plan items, which helped inform Cabinet's decisions.

The Committee visited Breakspear Crematorium to see and discuss plans for major development of the crematorium, already the fourth busiest in the country. A visit was also made to Mogden Sewage treatment to find out more about waste treatment and investigate whether the plant could cope with an increase in waste disposal units if these were fitted into new developments.

The Committee revisited its three 2006/7 reviews: on Anti-Social Behaviour; Reducing Waste & Increasing Recycling; and the Council's Policy on the Siting of Major Telecoms Equipment on Council land, finding out what had happened to their recommendations and updating on new developments.

### **Looking ahead to 2008**

The Committee will be reporting on its reviews of community consultation and engagement and cleanliness of the environment to the Cabinet in June. Presentations have been arranged for the Committee to review and comment on a new bereavement website and residential layouts planning guidance. A number of topics are under consideration for review in 2008/9, and the Committee aims to continue to develop ways of consulting and engaging residents in its work and of going out of the Civic Centre to find out about problems and services.

## **Social Services, Health & Housing Policy Overview Committee**



Cllr Judith Cooper (Chairman)

*Other Members of the Committee*

Cllr Michael White (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Tim Barker

Cllr Sid Garg

Cllr Pat Jackson

Cllr Peter Kemp

Cllr John Major

The Social Services, Health & Housing Policy Overview Committee is chaired by Cllr Judith Cooper and is responsible for undertaking the policy overview role in relation to the Council's Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Group. It is also responsible for reviewing the work of Healthy Hillingdon and other health promotion work undertaken by the Council.

The Committee has completed two in-depth policy reviews this year.

In its review of the ***Council's Support for Carers*** we sought to examine how the Council could continue its support to the often 'hidden army' of carers that save the Council and NHS many millions of pounds each year. We heard from the Council's officers and representatives of carers, and also visited carers' projects to directly explore the issues ourselves. We made a series of recommendations that sought to reassure carers that the Council will seek to support them in their role. In particular, we highlighted that the Council's billing system can sometimes cause carers concerns.

Our second and larger review was into how the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Group could develop a ***Customer Engagement Strategy***. After taking evidence from a range of witnesses, including several stakeholders from outside the Council, we recommend that all services within the Group are required to adhere to common customer engagement standards. Significantly, we believe that excellent customer engagement will raise resident satisfaction, improve the Council's performance in external assessments and also ensure the Council is not spending money on services that do not meet the needs of our customers.

### **Other work**

We have also undertaken a board range of other work including scrutiny of the Adult Social Care, Health & Housing Group's performance reports and budget proposals for 2008/9, and we reviewed the annual star rating for adult social care. We also provided comments to Cabinet on several reports on the Forward Plan. We established the ***Obesity Working Group*** that made a series of recommendations. It was excellent that Cabinet accepted our recommendation that greater attention be given to this pressing public health challenge.

## **Looking ahead to 2008/9**

We will look forward to considering the Executive's response to the recommendations of the Obesity Working Group, and also receiving updates on the Hillingdon Independent Living Centre (HILC) and our recommendations on the Council's support to carers.

## **Executive Scrutiny Committee**



Cllr Anthony Way (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr Mo Khursheed (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Tim Barker

Cllr Eddie Lavery

Cllr Kay Willmott-Denbeigh

Cllr David Yarrow

Church and parent governor representatives from the Education & Children's Services POC also sit on the Committee and can vote when Education issues are being discussed.

### **Scrutinising Executive Decisions**

The Leader of the Opposition, Cllr Anthony Way, is chairman of the Executive Scrutiny Committee. Its main role is to scrutinise decisions that have been taken by the Executive but have not yet been implemented. The Committee balance reflects the Council's political representation.

Six Cabinet decisions were 'called-in' during the Committee's second year:

- Corporate Procurement Unit – 2007/8 Programme and Approach
- Sports Hall and Hayes Amateur Boxing Club, Hayes Stadium
- Low Cost Home Ownership Strategy Options and Recommendations
- Final Monitoring Report for 2006/7 for Council Plan and Community Strategy Work Programmes, Achievements and Quarterly Performance
- Adult Social Care, Health and Housing – Pilot Service Review
- Allocation of Grant Funding 2008/09, in relation to Carers organisations funding and the grant to Ruislip Manor Sports and Social Club.

Following further information from officers and Cabinet Members, the only decision referred back to Cabinet during the year was Low Cost Home Ownership Strategy (June 2007). That was on the grounds the scheme required a high level of deposit and income and relatively few people might be eligible as a result. The Committee also asked that a wider look be taken at options to help first-time buyers. Cabinet reaffirmed its original decision. For the other called-in decisions the Committee gave written feedback to relevant Cabinet Members and officers with the aim of improving future decision-making.

In a further development this year, the Committee brought in a first stage process of asking for written clarification on decisions where the Committee were uncertain about the need for call-in. This was applied to twenty-seven executive decisions. Following satisfactory responses no further action was taken on these.

The Committee visited Kent Cabinet Scrutiny Committee in October 2007 to see that Committee in action and to talk to its lead Members and officers. It noted the wider scope and action of that Committee and the regular attendance of Cabinet Members.

### **Looking forward to 2008**

The Committee will continue its role of keeping a vigilant eye on decision-making and seek to guide officers and Cabinet Members towards making decision-making more transparent. The Committee also note two new provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 taking effect for the 2008/9 Council year will have implications for Scrutiny – the ‘Councillor Call for Action’ and new requirements on the executive to respond to Overview and Scrutiny recommendations.

## **External Services Scrutiny Committee**



Cllr Mary O'Connor (Chairman)

*Other Members*

Cllr Shirley Harper O'Neill (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Phoday Jarjussey

Cllr Allan Kauffman

Cllr Peter Kemp

The External Services Scrutiny Committee is chaired by Cllr Mary O'Connor and has a broad remit to scrutinise all non-Hillingdon Council organisations whose actions affect Hillingdon residents. The Committee has used this 'freelance' role to continue to undertake a varied programme of work in its second year.

Much of our first year was spent examining the Primary Care Trust's (PCT's) financial recovery process. With the gradual improvement to the financial position we were able in this year to turn our attention to the NHS' proposals to develop health services for Hillingdon residents. In particular we held meetings with local dentists and GPs to discuss the provision of these vital services in Hillingdon. We were pleased that the PCT accepted our recommendation to examine the physical access to primary care services.

Lord Darzi's 'Healthcare for London' review also occupied much of our time. Our Chairman – Cllr Mary O'Connor – chaired the pan-London Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) established to respond to the consultation on the proposals. We have also examined the implications locally with the NHS Trusts in Hillingdon. We will continue to stress to the NHS the importance of all partners working together to plan for future demands.

We have also continued to extend our scrutiny beyond the NHS and held productive meetings with the London Fire Brigade, the Metropolitan Police Safer Transport Teams, and Brunel University. We were delighted that as a result of our meeting with the Fire Commander, Cabinet agreed to provide £10,000 funding to support the 'Junior Citizens' scheme. This is an excellent example of how scrutiny can help the Council act as a community leader. Likewise our meeting on Brunel University provided the opportunity for local residents to discuss their concerns with the University, the President of the Union of Students, and Council officers. All sides agreed it was a highly valuable dialogue.

### **Looking ahead to 2008/9**

We look forward to examining the NHS' response to the Healthcare for London consultation and will continue to examine the proposals for developing local health services, including potential linkage with the Council's children's centres. In particular,

we will seek to ensure that proposals for the NHS include consideration of the futures of Mount Vernon and Harefield hospitals. We will also return to our recommendations from this year, including receiving the findings from the working group we established to review the transition from child to adult mental health services.