

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
17 JUNE 2002**

Councillors \*Robertson (Chair), \*J Brown (Vice Chair), \*Adamou, \*Davies, \*Dawson, \*Diakides, \*Dobbie, \*Lister, \*Prendergast, \*Simpson and \*Williams.

\*Mrs Shukla, Mr B Aulsberry (REJCC Representatives), \*Mrs Berkery-Smith, Mr L Howard (Church representatives), \*Ms E Pine and \*Mr R Sharp (Parent Governors representatives).

\*Members present

**SC01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** We received apologies for absence from Mr Howard and for lateness from Councillors Prendergast and Dobbie.

**SC02 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATION:**

Our Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year. We also welcomed Lesley Courcouf (Assistant Chief Executive Organisational Development) and Chris McLean (Interim Manager, Local Democracy) to the Council.

**SC03 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (08 April 2002) - Agenda item 4)**

Matters arising from the minutes of 8 April 2002

With reference to SC46, we noted that the completed Scrutiny Review of Post 16 would be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2002. The Chair also informed the Committee that a meeting had taken place with the Leader of the Council to discuss communication issues and concerns relating to the integrity and independence of scrutiny particularly in relation to Education Services. A letter outlining the content of the meeting had been sent to all members of Scrutiny.

**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2002 be confirmed and signed.

**SC04 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (Report of the Interim Manager, Local Democracy - Agenda Item 6):**

We received a report from the Interim Manager, Local Democracy setting out the terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and panels. We noted the proposals to establish a task and finish scrutiny panel (the topic yet to be decided). We also noted that the Leader of the Council would shortly discuss the possibility of the task and finish panel being chaired by a member of the opposition party.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**S05 PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES (Report of the Leader of the Council - Agenda Item 7):**

The Leader of the Council presented a report on the Executive's priorities for the coming year and our performance in the previous year. It was our aim to make the borough one of the best places to live and work in London. We enjoyed a unique and diverse culture and it was estimated that approximately 193 native languages were spoken in Haringey. We had also seen many changes

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over the last 4 years and had concentrated on building a sound financial foundation on which to operate, we were in a good financial position after some hard work from both Officers and Members.

We had recognised the need for improvement and had tackled issues such as: -

- The Unsatisfactory Ofsted report of 1999
- The tragic death of Victoria Climbié in February 2000 which highlighted the weaknesses in our Children's Services, despite the positive SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review in 1999
- The disappointing performance of our services in comparison to other authorities.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (Haringey's Self-Assessment) gave a full picture of the Council's progress and development. We had seen sound improvements in the last year with improved performance in services, added expertise in education and waste management, investment in customer services, investment in employee development, and had built effective partnerships within Haringey to improve the quality of life of residents.

#### Performance in previous year

Due to our sound financial base we have created a good foundation to meet the needs of the community. Residents have told us of their dissatisfaction in this year's residents survey. We have expanded our management capacity and prioritised key service improvements. We now needed to work harder to improve the image of our services, to recognise the improvements that have been made.

We have been working to the new Constitution with the political model of Leader and Cabinet. We have established a Scrutiny and Overview Committee with a number of scrutiny panels which would be playing an active role in holding Executive Members and Officers to account. They would have the responsibility of promoting and developing an inclusive dialogue with local communities. We have also produced our new constitution document, the backbone of our new style of governance. The constitution provides vital information for Members on new procedures for the Executive and Scrutiny as well as crucial information on Key Decisions, the Forward Plan, and Access to Information and Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers.

The new constitution has aimed to put together in one place all the key information about the political management of Haringey Council. It has adopted national guidelines and adapted them to our local conditions.

#### The Executive's priorities 2002-2003

The first meeting of the Executive would take place on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2002 and was likely to discuss the following challenges facing this new council:

- Tackling the east and west division in poverty, wealth, race and culture.
- Improving the over concentration of temporary accommodation in the borough.
- Reducing waiting time for permanent housing.
- Responding to the Ofsted report of February 2002.
- Ensuring that Neighbourhood Management and Renewal was positive and proactive.
- Working with Area Assemblies and community groups to build civic pride.
- Increasing the pace of improvement in the performance of Social Services particularly the Children's Services.

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- Implementing the new political management arrangements successfully.
- Continuing working with Accord to improve the Environment.
- Continuing work on the council-wide staff development and learning programme.

It was vitally important that the new political arrangements worked as effectively as possible. In particular, the relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive should be as strong as possible.

**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted

**SC06 THE FORWARD PLAN** (Report of the Assistant Chief Executive, Organisational Development - Agenda item 8):

The Assistant Chief Executive, Organisational Development, introduced the report. We noted that this was the primary source of information for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider regarding forthcoming Executive Key Decisions and holding the Executive to account. The Forward Plan was in its developmental stage and would be made available on the Council's website in order that local residents were kept informed of decisions made/to be made by the Executive.

Chairs of Scrutiny Panels were encouraged to use the Forward Plan as a tool to ensure that service areas within the remit of the panels were included in their work plans.

With reference to concerns raised about the Council's consultation strategy, the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Communication agreed to attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to answer questions on our strategy for internal and external consultation.

Concern was expressed that there were a number of major education items going to Executive on 18th June and some members would have wished to have had an input into the Post Ofsted Action Plan.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Organisational Development) added that consideration needed to be given to scrutiny's involvement in the process from an earlier stage.

**RESOLVED**

- That the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Communication attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to answer questions on the Council's consultation strategy.
- That Chairs of scrutiny panels ensure that the Forward Plan was used to identify service areas within their remit for inclusion in their work plans.

**SC07 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN** (Report of the Assistant Chief Executive Organisational Development - Agenda Item 9):

We considered the report, which outlined the contents of the 2002/03 Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP). We noted that the Best Value regime remained the principal means by which an

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authority was held to account for the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, and its proposals to improve them. This was our third BVPP which sets out the work of the Authority and identified the following:

- How well we had done against the targets set out in last year's Best Value Performance Plan and how we compared with other Councils.
- How we were planning to improve our services this year and how we achieved the changes.
- The new targets that we had set for the coming and future years.
- The building blocks we would put in place to ensure consistent, year on year improvement across all our services.

The Plan had been prepared in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance from central government and audited annually by District Audit. District Auditor's view on last year's BVPP was that it was well designed, readable and communicated an honest and full picture of our current performance and priorities for the future. The Plan summarised the steps taken to improve our services and was also an efficient management tool used to keep us on track and measure our year on year performance.

The key themes which emerged from the 2002/01 performance indicators were:

- For the majority of indicators that actually measured performance our performance continued to improve. There were approximately 64 indicators, which fell into this category. Performance had improved from previous years for 47 of those indicators.
- The rate of improvement was moderate in the majority of areas and we were at the beginning of our journey to becoming a high performance authority. As final figures for other authorities' performance were unavailable we were unable to benchmark our performance.
- Our education results although improved from previous years would not be in the top quartile.
- There had been significant improvements in the Children Services indicators for example: reviews of child protection cases indicated 93% of cases reviewed in 2001/2002 compared to 55% in 2002/01.
- Satisfaction ratings remained low and amongst the lowest compared to other authorities.
- The BVPP sets out the action and building blocks the Council was putting in place to improve performance.

### RESOLVED:

- (i) That the contents of the Best Value Performance Plan 2002/03 be noted.
- (ii) That the emerging themes from the provisional outturn BVPPs for 2001/02 be noted.

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- (iii) That the proposals for new Best Value regimes in Education and Social Services 2002/03 be noted.

**S08 WORK PROGRAMME FOR SCRUTINY PANELS** (Report of the Interim Manager Local Democracy - Agenda Item 10):

We agreed to defer consideration of this item to enable scrutiny panels to meet and consult on work plans for 2002/3. With reference to Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel, we noted that as of its Ofsted Action Plan implementation, the LEA had scheduled to develop a Strategy for Inclusion during the autumn. It proposed to begin with a general review of this area in order that the panel could make a substantial contribution to the development of that Strategy. The Committee endorsed the review on Inclusion due to commence before recess in August 2002.

**RESOLVED:**

That commencement of the Inclusion Review by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel be endorsed.

**SC09 UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEWS** (Agenda item 11):

Education - Post 16 Review

We noted that the Post 16 Review would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 July 2002.

Community Safety Review - Youth Crime

The review document had been considered by the new Youth Crime Co-ordination Group who were in the process of compiling a reply which the Health, Safer Communities & Voluntary Sector Unit would add into the sections that address wider corporate issues. The Chair, of the Crime and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel was aware that this item needed to be responded to. However, the view taken was that as this panel was relatively new, it was important for the Head of Health, Safer Communities and Voluntary Sector to support them in terms of their understanding of the issues within their remit. Therefore, the first two meetings would be focusing on the overview and on possible urgent areas such as street drinking, with the Executive response to the Review being ready for the September scrutiny cycle. This would also fit into the new Best Value cycle focusing on youth, which would incorporate safer communities as it impacted on young people.

Regeneration and Partnerships Scrutiny Panel

We noted that an update on the Scrutiny Review on Regeneration would be prepared and presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

**SC10 URGENT BUSINESS - IMPROVING SOCIAL SERVICES** (Report of the Director of Social Services - Agenda Item 12):

The Chair agreed to accept the report as urgent business. The report was late because star ratings for Haringey Council were not received until 30<sup>th</sup> May 2002, and there was a need to take urgent action to improve services. The report needed to be considered to allow Overview and Scrutiny Members the opportunity to comment on the proposed range of measures to improve Social Services performance. We noted Councillor Lister's declaration of interest in this item. Councillor Lister left the meeting during consideration of the report.

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The Executive Member for Social Services presented the report, which proposed a series of actions in response to the Children's Services targeted re-inspection which took place in February 2002, and the SSI's annual review meeting letter of 10 May 2002 which would address workforce stability, raised standards and enhanced performance.

We noted that the February 2002 inspection of Children's Services and the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) annual performance letter also identified areas where performance needed to be improved as well as areas where performance was currently good. We noted that recent SSI assessments indicated that the Council must, as a matter of priority, stabilise the workforce in order to deliver consistently high quality services to local residents. It considered that the staffing position was fragile and that the prospects for sustaining improvement would be compromised unless this issue was addressed. The SSI also encouraged the Authority to develop its management capacity to bring about the necessary improvements, both in day to day service delivery and the management of change, which would enable the modernisation agenda to be delivered. We noted that SSI would not accept that sufficient money was being spent on Children's Services whilst the total planned expenditure remained below the SSA sub-block for Children's Services. It was unlikely therefore to consider that satisfactory progress had been made unless additional resources were committed to Children's Services on a recurring basis.

We noted the following points raised by the Committee and responses received from the Executive Member and the Director of Social Services:

- There was a need for commitment to sustain further developments in Social Services.
- What were the implications for other staff across the Council?
- What were the proposals to address race issues in Day Care service?
- There was a need to consider long-term training.
- There were concerns around the 'see-saw' effect across all boroughs in terms of increasing pay scales for Social Workers.

### ***What about day to day child protection interaction?***

The Director of Social Services responded that working relations needed to be improved. The service was working closely with individual schools; meetings were taking place with Headteachers to look at practical solutions. The service was also working hard through the Area Child Protection Committee to ensure good and effective inter-agency working.

### **How would the increased funds in Social Services be managed in future years?**

- By setting clear targets with support to deliver services
- By setting clear expectations and monitoring outcomes
- The service needed an Improvement Plan to work to for the duration of the Council's subjection to Special Measures.

### **How far would this impact on the Council's sound financial base?**

The Director of Finance responded that our strong financial position enabled us to respond to difficulties or urgent policy issues by utilising funds in reserve, also that:

- Funds not earmarked are to be released to address the Social Services priorities identified in the report.
- It was unrealistic to think that this could be contained within the Council's budget.
- There was a need to look at Council Tax levels.
- We already have a fair indication of funding levels for next year. Any significant increase in Social Services' funding was unlikely.

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There was concern that the Carers Services were not mentioned in the report, as more funding was needed for Carers due to the ethnic make up of the borough, to provide specialist care for diverse needs of the borough. Concern was also expressed over the tri-borough health authority arrangement. One member asked whether there were any proposals to improve the efficiency of the health authority.

We noted that there were proposals to upgrade provisions for Carers. The Director of Social Services added that she would be happy to discuss this further outside of the meeting.

Generally there was considerable support from Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the proposals contained in the report. However assurances were needed that we would continue to preserve our commitment to improving other areas of service, for example continuing the good work in street scene and the environment.

**RESOLVED**

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee's support for the proposals outlined in the report improve the performance of Social Services be noted.

Councillor Irene Robertson  
Chair