

## **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**2 September 2002**

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

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

\*Members present

**SC20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** We received apologies for absence from Council member Simpson.

**SC21 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** (08 July 2002 & the Special Meeting held on 20 August 2002 - Agenda item 5):

Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2002.

With reference to SC15, the Committee requested that in future voting by Members should be recorded in the minutes.

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 20 August 2002

With reference to the call-in of executive decisions, we noted Members request that the recall period should be built into the Council's constitution to ensure that all relevant members were available to enable the call in process to work effectively.

### **AGREED**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July and of the Special Meeting held on 20 August 2002 be confirmed and signed.

**SC22 FINANCIAL PLANNING 2003/4 TO 2006/07** (Report of the Director of Finance - Agenda item 6):

The Director of Finance summarised the report, which outlined the key financial issues facing the Council in the light of national and local context. We noted that there were a number of financial risk issues which needed to be recognised. The overall position over the next four years requires careful consideration in respect of education passporting, investment priorities, the ability to identify efficiency savings and the impact of those factors on the level of council tax.

As with last year, the budget process was built around pre business plan reviews, which were designed to capture and consider all relevant information.

### **Education**

In clarifying the definition of 'passporting' the Director of Finance added that one of the key issues in the education strategy was whether passporting should be continued, and if so, how the possibility of a real terms reduction in our education SSA (as a result of formula changes next year) should be handled. Detailed consideration of the education budget would be undertaken by the Education Management Board who would make recommendations to the Executive.

With reference to Private Finance Initiative (PFI) proposals for schools, members sought assurance that there would be proper detailed discussion before any decisions were made. We noted that apart from passporting, there were three other issues of principal importance for

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education resourcing. Firstly, improving our understanding of the links between resources and performance and the action that the Council could take to support performance; secondly, the condition of primary school buildings and the possibility of using PFI as the only realistic method of dealing with this; and thirdly the growing place pressure on school accommodation. We note concerns that a large percentage of primary schools were voluntary aided, it was important that an in-depth analysis was undertaken to examine the effect PFI had on secondary schools. We note that PFI was one of a number of options under consideration. A detailed report would be presented to the Executive with a view to identifying gaps in resources.

### **Partnership working**

In response to concerns regarding the need for developing shared budgets, we noted that this was an area which needed to be developed further. Whilst there were successful business consultation events, other budget consultation could be substantially improved. In particular, we needed to engage corporately with the Haringey Strategic Partnership, and to consult more systematically with key service-specific stakeholders. This aspect of the process needed to be developed in line with the emerging consultation strategy.

### **Housing**

With reference to the housing separation proposals, we noted that it was the government's intention to retain its policy on the restructuring of the current pattern of provision of social housing and the ending of the local authority's role as direct provider. In recognition of this we have selected the arms-length company route as the favoured option. It was important that this was kept under review in the light of the improved performance which was required to pursue this route and the changes to assist the financial aspects of stock transfer in the Local Government Bill. We also noted that the separation of the landlord role from the rest of the Council would have accounting and financial implications which would require careful consideration. The net impact was likely to be a cost increase for the general fund and it was recommended that provision was made for planning purposes in the sum of £0.5m in 2003/04, with a further £0.5m the following year.

### **Formula Review**

In response to a request for clarification on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) we note that the Government's consultation documents (CSR and the formula consultation paper) were published in July 2002. We also noted the key issues which could have a significant impact on the Council. Also, that the Council was invited to respond to the formula grant consultation by the end of September 2002.

The Director of Finance added that it was disappointing that there were still some uncertainty at this stage in the budget planning cycle. However consultation was ongoing at officer and civil servant level through the Formula Review Group. We also noted that the proposals did not address some key issues facing Haringey, in particular homelessness, asylum seekers and mobility. Those factors would be incorporated into the safety value submission in due course.

We noted that the majority of the proposed changes in the CSR appeared ominous for the Council, primarily due to data changes.

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Task and Finish Scrutiny of the cross-cutting elements of the budget  
The Chair agreed to progress discussion between the Leader of the Co-  
Opposition Party in order to ensure that a 'task and finish' panel be e  
cross-cutting components of the budget.

The Chair in moving the report's recommendations stated the importa  
Panels to identify issues which may arise within their service area fo  
budget making process. There was flexibility within the budget-m  
meetings if necessary in order to ensure that members had the opp  
issues thoroughly.

### RESOLVED

That a copy of the Capital Strategy be provided to the Church Rep

### SC23 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROC SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT FOR 2001/02 (Report Services - Agenda item 7):

This report from the Director of Social Services set out the Council's per  
handling public and Local Government Ombudsman complaints. The  
Council's complaint procedures was published in May 2001. The re  
recommendations which were accepted by the Executive. The Exec  
change was needed in our approach to dealing with complaints at all leve

The report outlined achievements to date in implementing the recomme  
plan. The Corporate Complaints Team was established to co-ordinate  
procedures and took over responsibility for handing internal stage 3 com  
liaising with the Local Government Ombudsman.

We noted that the handling of complaints to the agreed timescales was p  
performance reporting. The Council's performance in complaints was no  
measures were in place to address this. A new software tool, which v  
System would shortly be introduced which would allow for more detail  
units. Benchmarking arrangements were also being developed with other  
possibly, with the Local Government Ombudsman. Appended to the re  
complaints received and dealt with by each service.

### Social Services Annual Complaint Report 2002/03

Due to the late hour, it was agreed that the Social Services element of th  
the next meeting of the Social Services & Health Scrutiny Panel.

### RESOLVED

1. That the complaints performance as 2001-02 has noted

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3. That the Social Services Complaints Report be presented to the next meeting of the Social Services & Health Scrutiny Panel.

### **SC24 UPDATE - REPORT ON IMPROVING CHILDREN'S SERVICES** (Report of the Director of Social Services - Agenda item 8):

The Executive Member for Social Services updated the Committee on progress made with children's services as a result of the additional funds agreed by members and the recommendations made by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI). We noted that as a result of the increase in salaries for front line staff, Haringey had become one of the top paying London Authorities. We noted the excellent response to the advertising campaign to recruit to the Social Workers and Social Workers' Assistants posts. The recruitment and retention package also provided a work environment conducive to good professional practice. We also noted that a research and training programme for children's social work staff had now been implemented and work was beginning on an extensive induction programme for all staff.

The Inspectors noted that most of the recommendations from the earlier inspection had been implemented and acknowledged the difficult context within which the Council was striving to improve services. However further and rapid improvement was essential and the action plan made clear our commitment to respond fully and promptly to the recommendations of the SS Inspection report together with issues raised in the Annual Performance letter.

Concern was raised regarding the delay of the new children facilities at Pulford Road through the New Deal for Communities initiative. It was agreed that officers would provide Councillor Adamou with details of the completion date of the Pulford Road site.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the positive improvements made since the announcement of new resources for Children Services be noted.
2. That Councillor Adamou be provided with details of the completion date of the Pulford Road site.

### **SC25 E-GOVERNMENT CUSTOMER CARE COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS BEST VALUE REVIEW** (Report of the Director of Environmental Services - Agenda item 9):

We received a report and a presentation from the Senior Projects Manager informing us of the scope of the review, the methodology, project issues and tasks remaining in completing the review. We noted that this was a series of reviews, sharing the same methodology and was the most extensive undertaken by the Council simultaneously. The review as a whole encompasses the following functions:

E-government	Customer Care
Complaints Management	Design and Print
Interpretation and Translation	Media and P.R
Publicity	Web Development
Communications	

The Committee decided to establish a working group in order to ensure that elected members played a significant role in contributing to the improvement plan.

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We noted the follow key performance issues requiring primary attention:

- All of the areas under review had recently been the subject of major changes in structure and personnel as part of an organisation-wide programme to transform performance. It was early days but there were clear signs that in all areas performance was being raised. The challenge was to ensure sustained improvements over the short, medium and long term, and also to meet the high expectation of members and the community.
- The goal of top quartile performance was achievable in all areas of the review. However, it was an uphill struggle and the aim was to make significant progress by the Council's own target date of 2005.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the scope, methodology and project issues, relating to the review be noted.
2. That the significant progress achieved in this review, within deadlines be noted.
3. That the plans for dealing with the Design & Print review be noted.
4. That an Action Group be established to consider the Best Value Review, to focus in particular on performance, the four Cs of best value and outcomes.

Councillor Irene Robertson  
Chair