

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

Councillors Councillors Bull (Chair), Adamou (Vice-Chair), Adje, Butcher, Mallett, Newton and Winskill

Apologies Councillor Aitken, J. Ejiofor

Also Present: Councillors Bevan, Dogus, Haley, B. Harris and Kober

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION
OSCO14.	WEBCASTING The meeting was recorded for live or future broadcast on the Council's website.
OSCO15.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aitken and Joseph Ejiofor (Parent Governor). Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Butcher.
OSCO16.	URGENT BUSINESS There were no urgent items.
OSCO17.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillors Bull and Winskill declared personal interests as Haringey Leaseholders. Councillor Adamou declared a personal interest as one of her daughters was a social worker and another of her daughters was a teacher.
OSCO18.	DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS There were no deputations, petitions, presentations or questions.
OSCO19.	BUDGET SCRUTINY - REVIEW OF PRE BUSINESS PLAN REVIEWS 2010/11 TO 2012/13 <u>Adult Social Care and Wellbeing</u> In respect of request 2 the Committee requested that all Ward Councillors be provided with a briefing note on the planned Home Care budget reductions and the impact that the loss of the Supporting People budget was likely to have upon this. It was noted that

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

consultation with the Third Sector would be essential in ensuring that their Services were fully utilised and provided value for money.

It was confirmed that in addition to the usual quality checks Councillors also carried out ad hoc visits to ensure that the quality of placements was to the standard expected (request 69).

The Committee was advised that the figures and projections used to plan services for people with dementia were agreed with NHS Haringey (request 70).

The Committee asked for a briefing note on the impact on Haringey of a new Government initiative for caring for the elderly (to be paid for out of efficiency savings) and the measures that were being taken by the Council to mitigate this (request 71).

It was confirmed the numbers of Looked After Children moving into adult social care were monitored to ensure that the relevant funding was transferred to Adult Social Services (request 72).

In respect of request 73 the Committee highlighted concerns about cuts to services for asylum seekers and asked that a detailed briefing note be provided including the percentage of the overall decline in asylum seekers and what this reduction meant in monetary terms and why the monetary savings were not higher given a reduction of 28 clients being supported.

The Committee noted the Adult Social Care and Wellbeing pre-business plan review and made the following recommendations:

- i) The Cabinet give an assurance that carers and clients would not be disadvantaged by this proposal and that there would be alternative methods of support provided, including extra home care, to ensure independent living.**
- ii) The Cabinet confirm that the proposal will not take services away from those who need it and that adequate access to advice and funding will be maintained.**

Housing

With respect to request 74 the Committee was advised that the restructuring of the Strategic Housing Service was being implemented. Each post had been reviewed and re-evaluated and recruitment had begun. The implementation of the restructuring of the Service would decrease the reliance on temporary staff.

There was discussion with respect to request 75 and pre agreed savings of £221K the Committee was advised that this sum was needed in order to deliver on targets with respect to reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation.

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

The Committee requested that further information was supplied with respect to requests 66 and 67.

In relation to request 76 the Committee asked for a more detailed briefing note including an analysis of current spending, numbers of leases usually renewed and how much was currently in the base budget.

The Committee asked for a detailed briefing note on what benefits the proposed investment of £769k (request 77) would bring to the Council, including how much money was in the rent deposit scheme, how many families would be assisted and whether this scheme was value for money.

The Committee requested a more detailed answer on the deletion of the 3 posts mentioned in request 78 and the likely impact on services, including figures.

The Director of Urban Environment advised that no assumptions had been made in terms of projecting the level of rental increases that would be made by the Government in 2010/11. Work on this had been delayed by late receipt of the determination of rent and subsidy for 2010/11 by two months.

Officers would circulate details of the proposed rent increase (request 81), including any impact on services, once the Government had issued a determination in respect of housing rent and subsidy for 2010/11.

The Committee noted the Housing pre-business plan review and made the following recommendations:

- i) The Cabinet member write to the Housing Minister on behalf of the Council regarding the late release of information used to determine housing rents.**
- ii) The Cabinet reconsider the proposal to reschedule pre agreed savings of £221k on additional staff until 2012/13.**

Environment and Conservation

There was agreement that the answers provided with respect to requests 82 and 83 were inadequate and that a more detailed response should be provided to the Committee with regard to both.

The Committee requested more information on where savings had been made by challenging suppliers and how much money had been saved.

Regarding requests 84, 85 & 86 the Committee asked for a more

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

detailed answer to the questions on increases in Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs), parking fees and permit charges and how many parking bays would be installed and removed.

The Committee requested a more detailed explanation of how savings would be made through the deletion of a cleaner post (request 89).

The Committee requested a more detailed response to the question on savings from sustainable transport and what services were threatened (request 90) and commented that written replies to some requests had been inadequate and of a poor quality.

In response to the Committee questioning in respect of request 93, the Director of Urban Environment stated that the £1,800k for planned road and pavement resurfacing would come from Council funds and was secure.

In respect of request 95, the Committee noted that some funding for improvements to Summerland Gardens car park would be met by the Children's Service.

The Committee were informed that Green Lanes was a priority area for Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding (request 96)

At its meeting on 7 December 2009 the Committee had requested further information on the number of trading businesses in Wood Green and how many were involved with the "town centre business group" (budget questions 34 & 35). The Committee expressed concerns about there no longer being a Town Centre Manager. The Committee noted that officers believed an adequate number of businesses were involved in the Town Centre business group which was a more effective approach than having a Town Centre Manager.

The Committee noted the Environment and Conservation pre-business plan review and made the following recommendation:

- i) **That Cabinet give an assurance that any proposed works to the car park did not preclude a two-way working for vehicles (access and egress) from the car park onto Summerland Gardens.**

Leisure, Culture and Lifelong Learning

The Committee noted that there had been no sign of a downturn in leisure activity and library room bookings in the Borough although there was less income for the Directorate through function hire and also burials. The Committee was assured that officers expected to manage services using existing budgets and agreed to provide more details to Committee Members on programmes in place to support residents during the recession.

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

In response to its enquiries about the external parks sponsorship income target (request 61) the Committee was informed that there was a low level of complaints about the discreet signs and banners used but there were no reasons to stop the initiative, which had been running for a significant period of time and generated revenue without impacting services.

In relation to requests 63 and 68, the Committee expressed concern that Muswell Hill Library was not fully accessible and requested a briefing note on how officers had investigated the possibility of providing disabled access to Muswell Hill library and what resources were available. The Committee noted that there was a lower level of capital available than in recent years and many projects could only be taken forward in stages. The capital receipt for the sale of the land to the rear of the Library would not cover the cost of the works but officers assured members that this was a priority and that the Directorate was working with Property Services to agree a design. The Committee asked for a pragmatic and holistic approach linking capital receipts from the sale of a proportion of adjacent land, capital bids and seeking external funding.

In response to concerns raised about the deletion of a museum attendant post (request 66) which could result in the loss of efficiencies in the museum service, the Committee were informed that additional staff were being moved into the building and therefore the deleted post would be covered. The Committee noted that Bruce Castle had been awarded the Public Sector National Customer Service Award.

The Committee noted the Leisure, Culture and Lifelong Learning pre-business plan review and made the following recommendation:

- i) **The Cabinet adopt a pragmatic and holistic approach to Muswell Hill Library, linking capital receipts from the sale of a proportion of adjacent land, capital bids and seeking external funding, with a view to expediting the planned works.**

Resources

Councillor Harris explained that, in relation to question 1, officers within Corporate Resources had been advised not to raise fees and charges above the level of inflation and Council Tax had been frozen.

The Committee asked whether the increase in housing benefit claims affected the specific grants (general question 2) and was informed by the Chief Financial Officer that the Council would receive increased grant funding of £100k as a result of the increase in claims. The Committee noted that the Council was catching-up on the backlog of cases.

In response to concerns about the 40% supplier turn-over rate

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

reported in question 3, and the cost of obtaining new suppliers, the Committee was informed that this was only 5% less than the average turn-over of Local Authority suppliers and that a new officer post was responsible for the process of registering new suppliers. It was noted that the Council had 8000 preferred suppliers including just one supplier for stationery but more than one supplier for other products where required. The Council was committed by European Union legislation to tender for new contracts every four years. The Committee noted that the Council had seen a reduction in rates especially from construction and security suppliers.

In response to the answer provided in request 12 the Committee expressed concern about the 7.5% reduction in grants. The Cabinet Member for Resources explained that optimistic savings could be made in areas such as IT and Communications as well as through a review of the support functions and strategic services.

In response to questions on request 14 the Committee was informed that long term contracts (5-7 years) for IT services were agreed but telecoms contracts tended to be short-term and were usually contracts negotiated by the Government.

The Committee requested details on how the Council's flexible approach to purchasing energy worked (request 14) and noted that the Council purchased energy on a flexible 6-monthly basis which made 7.5% savings and was not bound into a long-term contract.

The Committee received the tabled information in relation to request 15 (numbers of agency staff and consultants) and asked that more information on the reasons for using agency resources be circulated. Committee members emphasised that consultants should only be used for very specific projects. The Assistant Chief Executive People, Organisation & Development, explained that there was currently less permanent recruitment to replace leavers which would allow greater flexibility for future resources and some posts were hard to fill.

The Committee was also informed, in response to questions, which further to the Government announcing a 1% cap in public sector pay rises; the Council had attended a London-wide meeting with 29 other boroughs and gave opinions on pay rises that were closer to 0%.

In respect of request 19 the Committee noted that a decision had not yet been made about how the Council would spend the £1.2 million from Government for the Business Growth Incentive Scheme.

In response to the Committee's concerns about the uncertain future of Alexandra Palace, the Director of Corporate Resources explained that a governance and branding review of the Palace was taking place and a master-plan would be devised to establish what facilities and activities would be best placed at the Palace. The Committee emphasised the importance of openness and transparency in the transfer of funds from the Council to the Palace.

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2009**

	<p>The Committee noted the need to invest in the current Alexandra Palace Ice Rink before the old system failed.</p> <p>In response to concerns raised about request 20, re-aligning the rental income debit with the budget, the Committee noted that this was an area affected by the recession and high staff turn-over and there were still 14 properties within the portfolio that had not been re-assessed. In response to the Committees suggestions that free rent be provided to small business it was noted that if businesses were struggling to pay rent they could approach the Council with a viable payment schedule and business case.</p> <p>In relation to the IT Capital programme (request 29) Committee Members suggested that the redevelopment of the Council's website (on page 75 of the agenda pack) be deferred for 2/3 years. The IT Planning and Relationship Manager explained that there would be a feasibility study before any projects were approved but some of the software used by the Council was becoming un-usable and required upgrading.</p> <p>Members asked for details of the selling price of Tottenham Town Hall (request 31) and expressed concerns that there was no indication of saving money through the Accommodation Strategy. It was noted that the strategy could result in £1.4 million in savings which would benefit the capital fund.</p> <p>Officers agreed to circulate a more comprehensive list of the Council's projects to reduce carbon emissions and more details on saving energy at schools as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme (request 33).</p> <p>The Committee requested a briefing note on the IT projects that were likely to be approved for funding from the proposed IT capital bid and details of the rigorous justification process used.</p> <p>The Committee noted the Resources pre-business plan review and thanked all Cabinet Members and Officers for their assistance through the Budget Scrutiny process.</p>	
<p>OSCO20.</p>	<p>NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There were no items of urgent business.</p>	

The meeting ended at 21:55 hrs

COUNCILLOR GIDEON BULL

Chair

Councillor

Date