

Chair:
Councillor Charles Adje

Deputy Chair:
Councillor Harry Lister

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report covers matters considered by the Executive at our meeting on 20 September 2005. For ease of reference the Report is divided into the Executive portfolios.
- 1.2 We trust that this Report will be helpful to Members in their representative role and facilitate a fruitful dialogue between the Executive and all groups of Councillors. These reports are a welcome opportunity for the Executive on a regular basis to present the priorities and achievements of the Executive to Council colleagues for consideration and comment. The Executive values and encourages the input of fellow members.

ITEMS OF REPORT

Health and Social Services

2. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF BENEFIT TAKE UP

- 2.1 We considered a report which advised us of the findings of the Scrutiny Review of Benefit Take Up and proposed a response to the Review's recommendations as well as providing us with the opportunity to encourage benefit take-up as part of an anti-poverty strategy to deal with social exclusion. The implementation of the Review's recommendations would further ensure that the Council was working towards its objective of creating opportunities for the less well off and would require the nomination of an Executive Member lead as well as an officer lead at corporate level to deliver the strategy.
- 2.2 We noted that the Review had found that much good work was being undertaken within the Borough to promote benefit take up and that there was a strong commitment amongst partner agencies to improve services and develop closer working arrangements. It had also found that more could be done to improve benefit take up rates but that this was hampered by a lack of strategic direction and co-ordination. We also noted that a targeted advertising campaign directed at encouraging the take up of benefits was to be made in early 2006.
- 2.3 We placed on record our thanks to the Scrutiny Panel for the review and approved the detailed responses to the fourteen recommendations they had made. We also approved the commissioning of an anti-poverty strategy that focussed on benefit take up and income maximisation. We report, for information, that we also agreed that the Executive Member for Health and Social Services and the Director of Social Services be given the strategic lead on benefit take up and related anti-poverty work for the Council.

3. CHOOSING HEALTH – MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES EASIER

- 3.1 We noted that the Government's White Paper *Choosing Health* represented a significant shift in the culture of the role of public health in statutory services. The Government was promoting a new approach to the health of the public and there were clear expectations

about the role of local government in helping to deliver the change. There would be a need for local authorities to demonstrate across their many departments that there was a genuine joined-up approach with the NHS, voluntary and independent sector to deliver the requirements laid out in the White Paper. We also noted that the strategic advocated in the White Paper linked well with the Local Strategic Partnership, the performance of which had recently been favourably assessed and reviewed by the Government Office for London.

- 3.3 We agreed that the Director of Social Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Social Services produce an action plan to successfully implement the *Choosing Health* agenda and that any Member wishing to make comments should submit them to the Director. We also agreed that all major Council strategies should reflect the *Choosing Health* agenda and resources should be directed to implement these priorities.

Organisational Development and Performance

4. THE HOME COMPUTING INITIATIVE (HCI) SCHEME

- 4.1 The Home Computing Initiative (HCI) related to the Government's 1999 Finance legislation which allowed employers to implement a tax-exempt loan scheme for computer equipment for their employees and families to use at home. The Government was promoting the HCI to actively encourage home personal computer ownership and internet access in pursuit of its own 2008 Digital Home aspiration in order to stimulate IT literacy as the third basic life skill (the other two being reading and writing).
- 4.2 The HCI had been welcomed and endorsed by organisations such as the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). Employers could use the scheme to deliver additional benefits to their employees. The scheme was at least cost neutral for the employer and facilitated substantial cost savings to employees of as much as 50% of retail prices.
- 4.3 We report that we agreed to the Council's participation in the aggregated HCI scheme in collaboration with other London Connects member organizations for implementation within the Council by December 2005. We also agreed that authority to represent the Council in the planning of the HCI scheme in collaboration with other London Connects member organizations and to make the decisions required to implement the HCI scheme across London should be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Access).

5. INDEMNITIES FOR MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

- 5.1 This matter was the subject of a report to the Council by the General Purposes Committee on 18 July 2005 at which meeting it was resolved to provide an indemnity for officers and Members. We were advised that for legal reasons it was recommended that we should also agree the resolution and we report, for information, that we have done so.

Leader

6. WEB-CASTING OF EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 6.1 This matter was the subject of a report to the Council by the General Purposes Committee on 3 October 2005 at which time the web-casting of non-executive bodies was agreed as was a provisional Protocol to regulate it. We have now considered a similar report and we have agreed to the web-casting of the Executive and its subordinate bodies and to the adoption of the Protocol on web-casting.