

Policy Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

2006/7



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Policy Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2006/7

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Foreword

Cllr Ray Puddifoot – Leader of Hillingdon Council



Strong and effective democratic processes are central to good governance and high quality, value for money services. We therefore sought to introduce some ambitious reforms to our Policy Overview and Scrutiny functions after the May 2006 elections. Our aim was to clarify and strengthen the specific governance roles of the respective Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

We introduced a single Executive Scrutiny Committee to track what we in the Cabinet do, with the power to monitor and call-in our decisions. This has freed up the new Policy Overview Committees to carry out longer term reviews of key issues, contribute to our policy development processes and keep watch on council performance. The Policy Overview Committees can play a vital role in opening up the policy development process and advise Cabinet on potentially contentious issues. The External Services Scrutiny committee is the final piece in this new structure and makes a vital contribution to the Council's community leadership role.

This was a challenging programme of reform. The successes in this report demonstrate that the challenge has largely been met, although there are still areas for development, which will enable the Council to continue to improve the services it delivers to local people.

Hugh Dunnachie – Acting Chief Executive

Overview & Scrutiny in Hillingdon has played an increasingly vital role in helping to develop our approach to a range of issues and to help monitor the performance of council services. In addition, external scrutiny can have a real impact on influencing decisions that affect local people. This has been particularly true of the way they have examined decisions made by external organisations such as the police, utilities, transport and health.



By taking a cross-party approach to subjects that are of real interest to local people, the policy overview committees are a valuable resource for our residents. Hillingdon's Overview and Scrutiny functions have been recognised nationally as models of good practice and we have been able to demonstrate just what a powerful tool overview and scrutiny can be. One example of this is the scrutiny of Hillingdon's health services, which has ensured that decisions are being taken by external organisations in the best interests of local people.

Policy Overview and Scrutiny committees continue to play a key role in helping to develop and shape the council's policies and ultimately to deliver our vision of being a modern, well managed council, delivering excellent services.

Introduction: A New Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee Structure for a New Council

This report reviews the achievements of the Policy Overview & Scrutiny process in the 2006/7 Council year. This has been a challenging year which began with the creation of a completely new Overview & Scrutiny structure. However, through the hard work of both Members and Officers it has also been a positive year with some notable achievements.

The report first outlines the new structure and highlights some successes. It then identifies some areas for development before a report from each Committee is presented. Further statistics about our work are contained in the appendix.

The new structure

The year began with significant change following the May 2006 elections. A new structure was implemented with the creation of six new committees. The Leader's aim in proposing this new structure was to separate – and therefore sharpen – the respective roles of the individual committees. In particular, the reforms sought to make a clearer distinction between the 'overview' and 'scrutiny' roles that were previously both held by the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

Policy Overview Committees (POCs)

Four new Policy Overview Committees (POCs) have been established to advise Cabinet on policy issues before the Executive takes decisions. Each of the following Policy Overview Committees are responsible for a specific range of Council services:

- Corporate Services & Partnerships POC
- Education & Children's Services POC
- Residents' & Environmental Services POC
- Social Services, Health & Housing POC

The Policy Overview Committees undertake this role through a series of activities.

A central role of the Policy Overview Committees is to undertake in-depth policy reviews on specific issues. Reviews provide the opportunity to hear from members of the public and expert witnesses including officers from other councils and non-Council organisations. Reviews usually make recommendations to the Cabinet on how the Council could improve its work. As such, POCs perform a vital role in opening up the policy-making process to a wider audience, including people who would not normally have the opportunity to participate in the formulation of Council policy. Further information on the reviews undertaken this year, including key outcomes, is presented later in the report.

Policy Overview Committees also undertake a number of other important activities, including monitoring the Council's performance. This is primarily through quarterly reports, although Committees can request further information in response to a particular concern. Policy Overview Committees therefore play a central role in ensuring that the Council's Cabinet and officers

are providing high quality, value for money services.

Policy Overview Committees can also comment on reports coming before Cabinet for decision. Policy Overview Committees can use the expertise gained through their in-depth reviews and strategic monitoring of performance to advise Cabinet on the issues being considered. In addition, each Policy Overview Committee subjects the annual budget proposals for its relevant Council services to rigorous challenge before Cabinet decides on its recommendations to Council.

Two committees undertake the 'scrutiny' role and complement this strategic policy work of the Policy Overview Committees.

Executive Scrutiny Committee

The Executive Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the post-decision scrutiny role. Its primary role is to closely examine decisions taken by Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members and officers before they have been implemented. The Executive Scrutiny Committee meets within five days of Cabinet, and a majority of the Committee can 'call-in' a decision and, if not satisfied with the further information provided to them, ask the Cabinet or decision-taker to reconsider it.

The Leader of the Opposition chairs the Committee although as with all Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees membership is proportional to political group size on the Council giving the Conservatives a majority.

External Services Scrutiny Committee

The External Services Scrutiny Committee is the final piece in this new structure. It is responsible for scrutinising services provided by non-Council organisations in the Borough, in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Committee is responsible for identifying areas of concern to the community and instigating an appropriate review process. It is able to scrutinise any non-Hillingdon Council organisation whose actions impact on Hillingdon residents.

The Committee holds the health scrutiny role conferred by the Health & Social Care Act 2001, which requires senior managers of local NHS Trusts (including Hillingdon Hospital and Hillingdon Primary Care Trust) to attend the Committee and answer questions if required by Councillors. Local NHS Trusts must also consult the Committee about proposed significant changes to local services. Although the Committee's remit enables it to scrutinise a wide range of organisations, it is important to note that it only has these statutory powers in relation the NHS. Other organisations may refuse to attend or provide information.

Highlights and Successes: What has Policy Overview & Scrutiny Achieved in 2006/7?

This section seeks to provide a flavour of some of the successes of Policy Overview & Scrutiny in 2006/7. The function is about empowering non-Executive Councillors to make a difference to public services, and it is important to focus on the difference Policy Overview & Scrutiny has made.

Further information on the achievements of each Committee is contained later in the report.

Scrutinising the Local Strategic Partnership

Although the new Council year saw the introduction of a new Policy Overview & Scrutiny structure it was important to ensure the work undertaken by the former Overview & Scrutiny Committees was not forgotten. An excellent example of this continuity is the Community Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee review into the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Recommendations were wide ranging, and sought to clarify elected Member involvement in, and oversight of, the LSP. It also sought to clarify the working practices of the LSP.

Although the report was originally sent to Cabinet in the last Council year, Cabinet received a follow-up paper from officers in September 2006, which led to many of the recommendations being accepted. The review has subsequently been included in the Centre for Public Scrutiny's *Successful Scrutiny* publication as an example of good practice.

It is important that the success of this review is built upon and the External Services Scrutiny Committee received a briefing from the Acting Chief Executive on the proposed LSP Office and the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Committee welcomed this information and will ensure that non-Executive Members have the opportunity to review the work of the partnership and the LAA.

Making a difference:

- **The review resulted in a structural change to the LSP as the 'theme groups' were moved to the four blocks of the local area agreements (LAA.)**
- **The role of elected Members has been clarified. The recommendation was accepted that Cabinet Members sit on the relevant LSP Theme Groups.**
- **There is now strong recognition of the value of involving overview and scrutiny in the LSP/LAA process. Non-executive Members will have the opportunity to review progress on the LAA each quarter.**
- **Performance management of the LSP has become more focused with a reduction in the number of targets in the community strategy and an annual review of theme group performance by the LSP Executive.**

Creation of an Audit Committee to maximise elected Member oversight of the Council's finances

Elected Members have a key role in ensuring the Council has the sound financial controls needed to give residents the excellent services they

deserve. On 18th May 2006 Council agreed to establish an Audit Committee and invited the Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee to report on the Audit Committee's role and scope. The Committee undertook an in-depth review into this issue and heard evidence from professionals engaged in audit at KPMG and Barnet & Buckinghamshire Councils.

Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations at their meeting in December 2006.

Making a difference:

- **An Audit Committee will be established with an independent non-Councillor Chairman.**
- **The Committee will address concerns raised by the Audit Commission and will ensure that the Council's resources are being effectively used.**

Working Group to Review the Council's Policy on the Siting of Major Telecommunications Equipment

Following a request from Council, the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee established a Working Group to review the Council's policy on the siting of major telecommunications equipment in the Borough. Specifically, the Working Group sought to review the moratorium that prevented any form of telecommunications equipment being installed on Council owned property or land.

This is a highly sensitive issue and some people are concerned about the impact

of such equipment. The Working Group undertook three in-depth witness sessions and heard from a wide range of stakeholders including local residents, the Health Protection Agency and the mobile phone operators. The Working Group reviewed this evidence and decided to recommend that the Council adopts a more flexible policy. Cabinet accepted the recommendations without amendment.

Making a difference:

- **The Working Group were able to allow a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to a review of a highly contentious policy issue. As such, some people who may have opposed the revised policy have now had an opportunity to contribute.**
- **The recommendations enable the Council to balance the interests of both residents who seek to use mobile telecommunications equipment and those who oppose such equipment. The recommendations will improve communication between mobile phone operators, the Council and the public.**

Engaging at a pan-London level: The London Overview & Scrutiny Network

Members and officers have sought to engage with colleagues across London in order to learn from others and promote good practice at Hillingdon. It is therefore excellent news that Cllr Mary O'Connor, Chairman of the External Services Scrutiny Committee, was elected Chairman of the London Overview & Scrutiny Network. The network is an informal group hosted by London Councils and brings together

Members and officers involved in Overview and Scrutiny across London.

The network helps oversee the money allocated for the London Scrutiny Capacity Building Programme. Cllr O'Connor is working closely with the officer Co-Chairs of the network to identify how this money can be used to develop Member and officer scrutiny skills in London.

Making a difference:

- **Hillingdon is a significant participant in the London Overview & Scrutiny community. This will ensure that the Borough is well-placed to learn from the experiences of other Boroughs and will be able to showcase its key achievements.**

Scrutinising external organisations

The post election reforms involved the creation of an External Services Scrutiny Committee, which has a 'freelance' remit to scrutinise all non-Hillingdon Council organisations whose actions impact on Hillingdon residents. The Committee holds the health scrutiny powers conferred by the Health & Social Care Act 2001 and has used these to keep a close eye on the local NHS. The Committee has also undertaken work on Safer Neighbourhoods Teams, water shortages, and the voluntary sector. The Committee has sought to develop public engagement with the policy overview & scrutiny process by holding single issue 'themed' meetings and hosting meetings outside of the Civic Centre.

Making a difference:

- **NHS Chief Executives have been questioned about their actions and proposals for local health services in a public forum.**
- **The Committee has been able to alert Cabinet to issues of concern to local people enabling Cabinet to lobby partners as appropriate.**
- **Members of the public have been able to express their views on - and to - local service providers such as the Police.**
- **The Committee's suggestion led to Hillingdon Council working closely with Three Valleys Water to place a leaflet in the electoral registration letter encouraging water conservation.**

External Scrutiny conference

On 20th October 2006 the External Services Scrutiny Committee hosted a conference, *'Improving Local Services: The Role of External Scrutiny'*. The event sought to share learning of the experiences of external scrutiny across the national, regional and local levels of government. Following a successful bid for financial support from London Councils we were able to open the event to Councillors and officers from across London and our neighbouring Counties. Over 100 delegates packed into Committee Room 6, and feedback from the event was extremely positive. Nearly three-quarters of respondents returning feedback forms rated the event as excellent and several people said that it was the best conference they had ever been to.

Making a difference:

- **The conference placed Hillingdon ‘on the map’ and raised the profile of the Council and its work.**
- **Hillingdon was able to draw on the experience of external scrutiny elsewhere and this will be used to further develop the function at Hillingdon.**

Scrutinising – and working with – the Executive

The role of Policy Overview & Scrutiny is to act as a ‘critical friend’ to the Executive. It supports the Cabinet through advice on policy while the Executive Scrutiny Committee must advise Cabinet when it feels decisions may benefit from a second consideration. It is therefore vital that Policy Overview & Scrutiny and the Cabinet have a constructive working relationship. It is worth highlighting two developments on this topic. The Executive Scrutiny Committee undertook a review into Members’ information needs when making decisions and took evidence from BAA’s Finance and Property Director on private sector best practice. In addition, Cllr Philip Corthorne attended the Social Services, Health & Housing Policy Overview Committee to discuss key challenges for the Department and potential review topics.

Making a difference:

- **Steps taken to ensure a good flow of information between the Executive and Non-Executive Councillors should ensure high quality decisions.**

- **Cabinet Member attendance at Policy Overview Committee helps ensure the Policy Overview Committee is contributing to the Council’s priorities.**

Helping Hillingdon become a modern, well-managed Council which delivers excellent services

These are selected examples of the range of work undertaken to help the Council deliver high quality value for money services. More detail is presented in the reports from each Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In short, the Committees have:

- Held over 60 meetings
- Called-in seven Executive decisions and asked Cabinet to reconsider one of these
- Sent nine in-depth reviews to Cabinet for consideration
- Received verbal evidence from over 86 non-Hillingdon Council witnesses, including the Chief Executives of three local NHS Trusts and the Finance & Property Director from BAA
- Commented on 12 Cabinet Forward Plans items prior to the decision being taken
- Monitored the Quarterly Performance Reports for each Council Group
- Examined the budget proposals for each Council Group and submitted comments to Cabinet
- Visited various community facilities including an anti-graffiti youth project, West London Domestic Violence Court, a

recycling plant, and the Riverside mental health unit

- Written five letters to the Leader of the Council.

Areas for Development: **Priorities for 2007/8**

There have been significant achievements in the past year, with a new structure delivering tangible outcomes. However, the Members and officers engaged in Policy Overview & Scrutiny are not complacent and we are determined that the function should continue to develop as part of the Council's improvement drive. This section of the report reflects upon our priorities for developing Policy Overview & Scrutiny in 2007/8.

Scrutinising budget proposals

The central role of Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees is to help ensure that the Council delivers high quality, value for money services. A key part of this role is ensuring that the Council's budget proposals achieve an appropriate balance between the needs and aspirations of various local residents.

This year's examination of the proposed budget by the Policy Overview Committees (POCs) followed a similar process to that used for the previous Overview & Scrutiny Committees. Each POC received a high level paper in December outlining the major financial issues facing their relevant Council services prior to the detailed proposals being considered in January. Comments from each POC were then sent to Cabinet for consideration. For the third year running Members were offered a

full-day training session on budget scrutiny delivered by the Institute of Public Finance.

The process went fairly well with each POC submitting comments to Cabinet. However, feedback suggests that some changes could be required for a new Committee structure with a new group of Members. In particular, Members felt that the reports before each Policy Overview Committee were too complex and difficult for non-financial 'experts' to understand. Members also felt that the approach of using standard templates meant that there was too much information on the corporate context. In addition, Members felt that the process was starting too late which meant that their comments could have little influence as the main decisions had already been taken.

Feedback from the budget scrutiny training was very good, with Members finding the explanation of financial terminology, the budget process, and the links between the service and budget plans particularly useful. However, attendance at the training was low, with only eight Members able to attend. Feedback suggests that many Members are not able to attend an all day session and officers will examine whether an alternative training format would be of greater use to Members, e.g. a shorter evening session.

Potential Improvements:

- **Policy Overview Committees could receive a briefing on the potential issues in the budget much earlier (potentially in July or September).**
- **Reports presenting the budget proposals need to be made more**

accessible to Members, particularly to make savings and growth proposals more explicit.

- **An examination of how Members could receive support and development to aid their scrutiny of the budget.**

Increasing public and stakeholder engagement

A key aim of the Government in introducing the modernised decision making process was to ensure the public were able to participate in the running of local services. Although Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees do not make decisions about the delivery of services they can play a significant role in facilitating public engagement. Some Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees have invited a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to their reviews, demonstrating the role they can play in opening up the policy development process to a wide range of views. In addition, members of the public have attended the External Services Scrutiny Committee when controversial issues such as the future of Northwood & Pinner Hospital were being discussed.

However, despite these examples it is clear that more could be done to improve public engagement and participation in the Policy Overview & Scrutiny process. The former Community Partnerships & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertook a review into this issue in 2005/6. However, this review was not able to fully address this topic as the elections shortened the Council year. Increased public engagement in Policy Overview & Scrutiny will be a priority for the forthcoming year, with a

proposed conference being held to explore this issue further.

Potential Improvements:

- **Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees will hold single issue 'themed' meetings wherever possible to encourage stakeholder engagement.**
- **Hillingdon will host a conference in the second half of 2007 to examine how to involve the community in Policy Overview & Scrutiny with contributions from local community groups, the local media and people who have done this successfully elsewhere.**

Clarifying the roles of respective Policy & Overview Committees

The Leader's aim in creating this new structure was to clarify, and therefore strengthen, the specific governance roles of the respective Overview & Scrutiny Committees. In particular, the objective was to ensure that the Policy Overview Committees focused upon pre-decision advice to Cabinet and aided long-term policy development by undertaking in-depth reviews, while the Executive Scrutiny Committee would subject decisions to rigorous scrutiny by exercising the 'call-in' power.

The successes highlighted earlier in this report demonstrate that this new structure is already working well. However, it is vital that performance is monitored and improvements made where necessary. As such, minor amendments to the terms of reference of the Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees will be presented to Cabinet and then Annual Council in April and May 2007. These amendments will seek

to clarify the respective roles and ensure effort is not duplicated.

It is proposed to simplify the terms of reference for the Executive Scrutiny Committee to enable it to focus on reviewing Executive decisions and subjecting these to in-depth scrutiny before they are implemented. The four Policy Overview Committees would then undertake all in-depth reviews of the Council's policies and services. The External Services Scrutiny Committee will also monitor the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) given the central role of the Council's partners in delivering these.

Potential Improvements:

- **Executive Scrutiny Committee to give a greater focus to scrutinising Executive decisions that have been taken but not yet implemented.**
- **External Services Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Services Policy Overview Committee to ensure non-Executive Members are involved in monitoring the LSP and LAA.**

Reports from Each Committee



Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee



Cllr Richard Lewis (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr Brian Crowe (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Janet Gardner

Cllr Sid Garg

Cllr John Hensley

Cllr Michael Markham

Cllr Brian Stead

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. These are primarily strategic policy and internal functions such as finance, property, personnel, legal services, ICT, economic development, and equalities and diversity.

Audit Committee

The Committee has a very large portfolio of services, and Members were concerned that they were not able to give the Council's audit work sufficient attention. The Committee's first review was to examine how a new Audit Committee should operate. Evidence was taken from leading Councils and the private sector, and the recommendations enabled the new Audit Committee to meet before the end of the Council year. This will help improve the Council's CPA rating and will ensure the Council's audit and finance procedures receive appropriate Member oversight.

Other reviews

The Committee have also undertaken two other in-depth policy reviews in 2006/7. One of these reviews sought to examine Hillingdon's strategy for a sustainable economy focusing on skills and training. The review arose in response to data gathered during work on Hillingdon's Strategy for a Sustainable Economy which showed that Hillingdon has a high proportion of low skilled workers. The review took evidence from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC), trainers and local employers. This evidence will be used to make recommendations to the LSC and Cabinet. The Committee also started a review into the use of Council owned shops on housing estates with an evidence session held in March.

Other work

The Committee has combined these reviews with other policy overview work including:

- Review of the Finance & Resources Group and the Deputy Chief Executive's Office Quarterly Performance Reports
- In-depth scrutiny of these Groups' budget proposals for 2007/8
- Review of audit and risk reports prior to establishment of the Audit Committee

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 Alan Kauffman

Cllr Anita Smart

Representative Members for Education issues:

Reverend Douglas Cave, Church of England representative

Anthony Little, Roman Catholic representative

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.

The Committee has continued the review of Transition from Primary to Secondary School started by the former Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the last Council. Further evidence has been taken, and a final report will have been completed the end of the Council year.

The Committee's second main review this year was on 'Widening the Scope of the Education Service'. As part of that review the Committee commented on the Early Years strategy (part of the Council's Policy Framework) and, following a Council motion, commented to Cabinet on the Government's proposals for a Children's Information Database.

Other work

The Committee has also:

- Commented on the integration of Education and Children's Services
- Reviewed the Quarterly Performance Reports for the new Education and Children's Services Group
- Subjected the budget proposals for Education and Children's Services Group to in-depth scrutiny
- Considered the Council's 14-19 strategy and a report on School Places in the Borough.

Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee



Cllr Shirley Harper-O'Neill (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr Graham Horn (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Ken Bartram

Cllr Janet Duncan

Cllr John Oswell

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 – first year and undertaken two in-depth reviews. It also established a Working Group to review the Council's policy on siting telecommunications equipment on Council land (referred to earlier in the report).

Stronger Families: Respect for all – Review of Hillingdon's ASB Strategy

Recognising that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) touches all residents' lives, Members felt that this should be the Committee's first policy review. The Committee took evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, youth and community groups, and various Council officers. A visit was also made to a youth diversionary project. Recommendations went to the March Cabinet.

Waste Reduction and Recycling

The Committee's second review was to examine how the Council could meet its challenging recycling targets of 40% of waste recycled by 2010 and 50% by 2020. The Committee took evidence from officers from best practice organisations and high recycling local authorities, as well as seeking the views of local residents and environmental groups. This information was used to formulate recommendations to Cabinet in April.

Other work

The Committee has monitored the performance of the Council's Environment & Consumer Protection and Planning & Community Services Groups, and commented on the budget proposals for these services. The Committee took part in the consultation on Hillingdon's Local Development Framework Core Strategy. It also submitted comments to Cabinet on eleven Forward Plan items, which helped inform Cabinet's decisions. The Committee has recently been investigating how Hillingdon might secure a specialist domestic violence court and expects to report on this in May 2007.

Social Services, Health & Housing Policy Overview Committee



Cllr Catherine Dann (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr Michael White (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Sid Garg

Cllr Pat Jackson

Cllr Peter Kemp

Cllr John Major

Cllr Kay Willmott-Denbeigh

The Social Services, Health & Housing Policy Overview Committee is chaired by Cllr Catherine Dann and is responsible for undertaking the policy overview role in relation to the Adult Social Care and Housing services. 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 in its first year.

Housing Support for Vulnerable People

The first review sought to examine the Council's support to enable people to live in their own home. The review covered two areas: sheltered housing and support services for vulnerable people in the private sector. The Committee heard from a range of witnesses, including service users, the voluntary sector, and a best practice provider of sheltered housing. The Committee concluded that the service was generally performing well and there were no major gaps in services. The review made eight evidence-based recommendations which it believes will maximise the use of the Council's resources and ensure more people can benefit from housing support services. Cabinet considered the report in March and the Committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

Hillingdon Independent Living Centre (HILC)

The Committee's second review was into the Hillingdon Independent Living Centre, and in particular the rationale for enhancing the existing services. The Committee heard from Council and Hillingdon Primary Care Trust officers, service users and the voluntary sector. The Committee produced a preliminary report that will feed into the work currently being undertaken by consultants employed by the Council.

Other work

The Committee has combined these reviews with other policy overview work including: scrutiny of the Adult Social Care, Health & Housing Group's Quarterly Performance Reports and budget proposals for 2007/8, and review of Social Services' Annual Star Rating and proposed action to address the findings. The Cabinet Portfolio holder also attended the Committee to discuss challenges facing the Council in this area.

Executive Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Anthony Way (Chairman)

Other Members of the Committee

Cllr Mo Khursheed (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Tim Barker

Cllr Judith Cooper

Cllr Michael Markham

Cllr David Yarrow

The Church and parent governor representatives from the Education & Children's Services POC also sit on the Committee 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. This is known as the 'call-in' power. Seven decisions have been called-in during the Committee's first year:

- Recovery Savings Plan 2006/2007: reductions in Education posts
- Fair Access to Care
- Corporate Identity
- Funding Request for Consultants
- A Contract for the Supply of Temporary Care Staff
- Learning Disabilities Modernisation Programme
- Local Development Framework Core Strategy: consultation response

Following further information from officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee decided only to refer the decision on Corporate Identity back to Cabinet. This was referred back on grounds of the cost of changing the Council's logo at a time of financial restraint and due to a lack of information about the rationale for the proposed change. Cabinet reaffirmed its original decision. In addition to called-in decisions, the Committee also wrote to the Leader about their concerns on a further five decisions.

In-depth reviews

Finding problems with the adequacy of information in Cabinet reports, the Committee undertook a review into Members' information needs concerning decision-making, which was reported to the April 2007 Cabinet. The Committee also undertook a scrutiny review of Hillingdon's approach to meeting special educational needs, following concerns raised by a local voluntary sector group over the impact of the 2006/7 recovery savings.

External Services Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Mary O'Connor (Chairman)

Other Members

Cllr Shirley Harper O'Neill (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Phoday Jarjussey

Cllr Peter Kemp

Cllr Eddie Lavery

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 undertake a varied programme of work in its first year.

A large amount of time has been spent scrutinising the financial position of Hillingdon Primary Care Trust, which for a significant part of the year has been the worst financially performing NHS Trust in the Country. However, the Committee have also examined a range of other issues including:

- Safer Neighbourhoods Teams
- Hillingdon Hospital
- Mental Health Services
- The Voluntary Sector
- The water drought
- Community cohesion

The Committee have sent three reports to Cabinet on their work. This has also informed Cabinet about issues of concern to local residents and asked Cabinet to lobby partners where appropriate.

A highlight in the Committee's first year was the conference held in October. Over 100 people from across London and Hillingdon's neighbouring counties attended and feedback was extremely positive. The event contributed to Cllr O'Connor's aim of putting Hillingdon on the 'scrutiny map'.

Looking ahead to 2007/8

The Committee are keen to build on this productive first year and have started to plan for the next Council year. Potential topics include mental health services, anti-social behaviour on local buses, Community Fire Safety and dentistry.

The Committee will also oversee the contribution of the Council's partners to the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement.

Appendices



Appendix A: Improvements to Policy Overview & Scrutiny **Following Stakeholder Comments**

This report provides a flavour of some of Policy Overview & Scrutiny's achievements in helping Hillingdon Council deliver high quality value for money services. These achievements are only possible through the contribution of witnesses from both external organisations and Hillingdon Council's officers.

Each year the Overview & Scrutiny Team surveys those who have given up their time to attend meetings, and asks people for suggestions on how we could improve our service. Democratic Services values this feedback, and comments are implemented wherever possible. Some examples of how we have used comments are presented below:

"You said, We did..."

Suggestion: 'Have more community involvement'

- What we did: Voluntary and community sector groups have given evidence to several reviews and members of the public were invited to speak at a meeting of the Working Group examining the siting of telecommunications equipment. However, more needs to be done on this issue, and Democratic Services will host a conference to explore community engagement in Policy Overview & Scrutiny in the second half of 2007.

Suggestion: 'Smaller agenda with more time to explore specific issues in detail'

- What we did: External Services Scrutiny Committee holds single issue 'themed' meetings which enable greater focus, while Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee holds separate meetings to examine Cabinet Forward Plan items. It is hoped that other Committees will follow these examples.

Suggestion: 'Greater precision on what is being reviewed and why'

- What we did: Making sure that all Committees draw up a scoping report for every review. This includes a justification of why the review has been chosen and its terms of reference. This year the scoping reports for each review were put on the [Council's website](#) for ongoing reference by all interested parties.

Suggestion: 'Greater focus in meetings required, pre-determined questions would help'

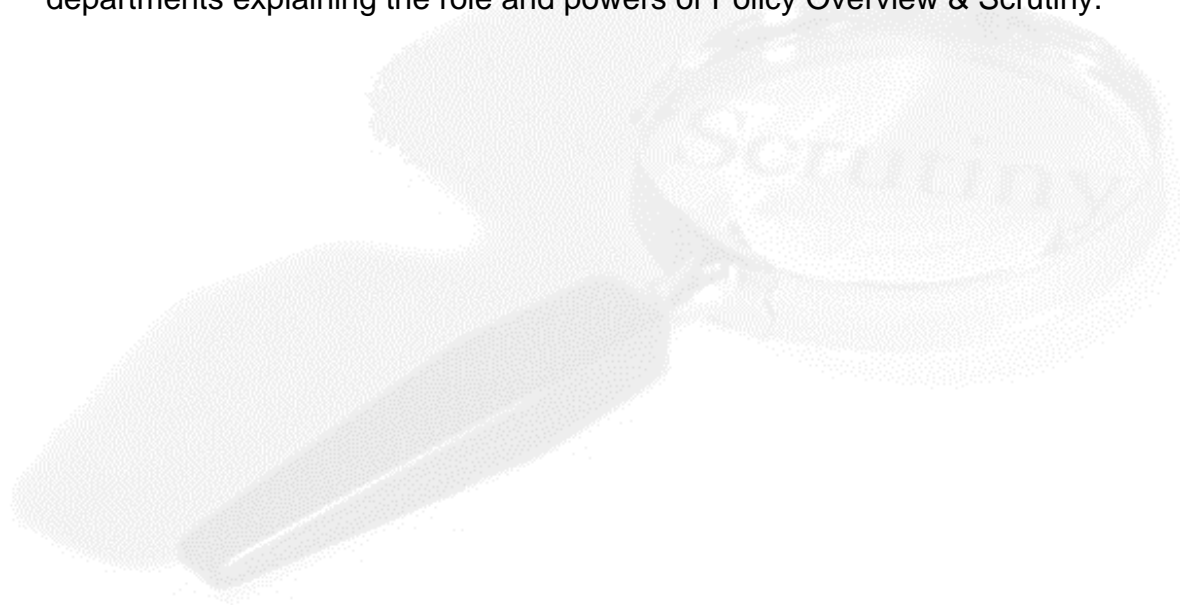
- What we did: Following on from the continued use of scoping reports, Scrutiny Advisors draft key questions to be used by the Committee in witness sessions. These are sent to the witnesses before the meeting so that witnesses are prepared to provide the information required by Members.

Suggestion: 'Developing Members' skills in undertaking investigations including questioning techniques and analysing data and information'

- What we did: Member development is a major priority for the Council and the upcoming Member Development Working Group will hopefully explore how Members can receive the appropriate skills for Policy Overview & Scrutiny. Two new Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chairmen have attended a training course at the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Suggestion: 'Provide better information prior to the meeting, including the powers of the Committee'

- What we did: Witnesses and officers attending a Policy Overview or Scrutiny Committee for the first time are sent an information sheet telling them 'What to Expect'. This will be reviewed and refreshed for the next Council year. Officers in the Overview & Scrutiny Team have delivered presentations to colleagues in other departments explaining the role and powers of Policy Overview & Scrutiny.



Appendix B: Policy Overview & Scrutiny Reviews 2003-7

2006/7

- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Hillingdon's Strategy for a Sustainable Economy
- Hillingdon's approach to meeting Special Educational Needs
- Safer Neighbourhoods Teams
- The Council's Property and Estates
- Waste reduction and recycling
- Community Cohesion
- Establishing a Domestic Violence Court
- Hillingdon Independent Living Centre
- Housing support for vulnerable people
- Members' Information Needs Concerning Decision Making
- Members' Role in Audit
- Transition from primary to secondary school
- Widening scope of the Education Service: Hillingdon's approach

2005/6

- Council's Housing Strategy
- Frontline Service Delivery
- Impact of Heathrow Airport on the Hillingdon Health & Social Care Economy
- Local Strategic Partnerships - Hillingdon Partners
- Progression from Primary to Secondary School
- Sport & Physical Education Strategy
- Customer Access (Complaints)
- Hillingdon Homes' Performance
- Information given to residents about Council Tax
- Planning Performance - Continuous Improvement
- Road Safety
- Wider Participation in Overview & Scrutiny

2004/5

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Business Continuity
- Health Promotion in Hillingdon
- Recruitment and Retention in Education Services
- Review of the National Service Framework for Older People in Hillingdon
- Town Centre Partnerships
- Budget Planning Process
- Choice Based Lettings
- Local Development Framework
- Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy
- Supporting People

2003/4

- Air Quality Action Plan
- Engage Youth
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Innovative Affordable Housing
- Review of Hillingdon's Performance: Delayed Discharges
- Role of Community Councillors
- Transport Strategy
- Domestic Violence and Children
- Heathrow City Growth Strategy
- Incineration: Waste to Energy
- Joint committee report on cancer services
- Rigorous Inspection of Contracts
- Standards at Key Stage 3
- Vision for Health: Overview Programme
- Voluntary Sector Grants Review

Appendix C: Policy Overview & Scrutiny – Some Key Statistics

In 2006/7, Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committees have:

- Held over 60 meetings
- Called-in seven Executive decisions and asked Cabinet to reconsider one of these
- Sent nine in-depth reviews to Cabinet for consideration
- Received verbal evidence from over 86 non-Hillingdon Council witnesses, including the Chief Executives of three local NHS Trusts and the Finance & Property Director from BAA
- Commented on 12 Cabinet Forward Plans items prior to the decision being taken
- Monitored the Quarterly Performance Reports for each Council Group
- Examined the budget proposals for each Council Group and submitted comments to Cabinet
- Visited various community facilities including an anti-graffiti youth project, Brent Domestic Violence Court, a recycling plant, and the Riverside mental health unit
- Written five letters to the Leader of the Council

Appendix D: Criteria for Selecting Policy Overview Reviews

1. Strong public interest
2. Government pressure
3. Included in Council Plan/Hillingdon Improvement Programme
4. Inspection report recommendation e.g. performance standards poor/below target
5. Area within Council's control/influence
6. High impact on residents
7. Expertise available on which to draw
8. Good practice available elsewhere

Topics that score highest should have priority for consideration

Appendix E: External Witnesses Giving Evidence in 2006/7

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|--|
| • Chris Commerford | Age Concern | • Heather Brown | Hillingdon & Ealing Citizens Advice |
| • Les Kidner | Audit Commission | • Peter Sale | Hillingdon Economic Business Partnership |
| • Margo Murdis | Audit Commission | • Stephen Meechan | Hillingdon Hospital |
| • Julian McGowan | Audit Commission | • David McVittie | Hillingdon Hospital |
| • David Springthorpe | BAA | • Jacqueline Totterdell | Hillingdon Hospital |
| • Joe Hardman | BAA Heathrow | • Elizabeth Palmer | Hillingdon Hospital |
| • Ray Taylor | BT Wholesale | • Duncan Struthers | Hillingdon Interfaith Network |
| • John Collins | BT Wholesale | • Yi-Mein Koh | Hillingdon PCT |
| • Tracie Evans | Bucks CC | • Ian Ayres | Hillingdon PCT |
| • Dr Peter Carter | Central & North West London Mental Health Trust | • Antony Sumara | Hillingdon PCT |
| • Colin Constantine | Central & North West London Mental Health Trust | • Barbara Wood | Hillingdon PCT |
| • John Vaughan | Central & North West London Mental Health Trust | • Dr Hilary Pickles | Hillingdon PCT |
| • Claire Murdoch | Central & North West London Mental Health Trust | • Linda Trueman | Home-Start Hillingdon |
| • Dr Alex Lewis | Central & North West London Mental Health Trust | • Siobhan Moore | Housing 21
Involved with Hillingdon Youth Parliament |
| • Sara Whittaker | Central & North West London Mental Health Trust | • Peter Smallwood | |
| • Obaid Siddiqui | Connecting Communities BAME Forum | • Tim Copnell | KPMG |
| • Tim Hind | Cordis Bright | • Michael Bradley | LB Barnet |
| • Colin Horswell | Cordis Bright | • Stephen Didsbury | LB Bexley |
| • Angela Wegener | DASH
Deansfield Primary School,
Hillingdon | • Helen Oliver | LB Brent |
| • Sue O'Brien | | • Andrew Baker (sent written evidence) | LB Harrow/Professional Assoc |
| • Chris Beek | DfES | • Roger Rickman (sent written evidence) | LB Harrow |
| • Linda Lancaster | Frays Housing | • Sunita Sharma | LB Hounslow
Learning & Skills Council,
London West |
| • Teresa Simmonds | Frays Housing | • Ellen Quayle | Learning & Skills Council,
London West |
| • Doug Simpson | Greater London Authority | • David Boyer | |
| • Isabel King | Groundwork Thames Valley | • Peter Thorpe | London Ambulance Service |
| • Neil Sherman | Harlington Community School | • Sue Harris | London Borough of Richmond |
| • Aris Protonotarios | Hayes Factory Manager | • Fiona Clough | Metropolitan Police |
| • Dr Michael Clark | Health Protection Agency | • Doug Dewey | Metropolitan Police |
| | | • Jeff Bannister | Metropolitan Police |

- Chief Supt Carl Bussey Metropolitan Police
- Nigel Evans Metropolitan Police
- Frank Freeman Metropolitan Police
- Supt Bob Parkinson Metropolitan Police
- CI Maurice Hartnett Metropolitan Police
- Sgt Dave Hooper Metropolitan Police
- PC Kate Henry Metropolitan Police
- Andy Young MJF
- Nicola Davies Mobile Operators Association
NCH/Hillingdon Youth
Inclusion Panel (YISP)
- Sylvia Smith
- Jim Stevenson o2
- Rebecca D'Arcy Orange
- Roger Edwards Oxfordshire CC
- Alison Beasley Project 2041
- Pauline Cooper Service user
- Natalie McLean Service user
- Bryan Steeples Sheltered housing resident
South Ruislip Residents
Association
- Brian Robson
- Anthony Wills Standing Together
- Lorraine Penson Sure Start, Townfield
- Gordon Simmons T-Mobile
- Preston Brooker Uxbridge Bus Garage
- Michael Farley Uxbridge College
- Judith O'Neill Uxbridge College
- Nicola Whitehead Vodafone
- Mike Nichols West London Waste Authority
- Daniel Haigh West London YMCA
- Mark Jolly West London YMCA

