



VALUE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT, 2010/11

SUMMARY

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during the past Council year.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to note the Committee's activities and performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council note the 2010/11 Annual Report of the Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REPORT DETAIL

During the year under review, we have met as a Committee on 7 occasions (including 1 special meeting) and dealt with the following issues.

1. THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

At its first meeting in July 2010, the Committee received a briefing on the role of Overview and Scrutiny. This covered function of topic groups, the requisition process and the Committee's role in budget scrutiny. The

Committee's role in scrutinising aspects of the Local Area Agreement and, where appropriate, dealing with Councillor Calls for Action was also considered. The Committee noted that Council had recommended that only one topic group be run under the auspices of each Committee at any one time.

2. HEAD OF SERVICE INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation that outlined the main areas that were covered by the Committee's remit. As regards customer access at the Council, the Committee was informed that the aim was to encourage customers towards self service as much as possible whether over the telephone or via electronic means whilst retaining current channels that included face to face contact.

As part of the new E-government and ICT strategy that allows the use of mobile IT and a greater amount of shared services. The Council had an arrangement that was unique across London, the ICT head of service was being shared with London Borough of Newham. This would allow more efficient use of skill sets.

The Committee was also responsible for overall scrutiny of financial issues. This included the Medium Term Financial Strategy, budget management and internal audit. Also covered were Human resources issues that included learning & development, recruitment and workforce information such as sickness levels.

Asset management including property acquisition and disposal came within the Committee's remit as did facilities management including cleaning, hall keeping and the reception service at Council buildings. Other areas which the Committee was responsible for scrutinising included communications, and legal & democratic services. The Committee had overall responsibility for scrutinising partnership working taking place under the Local Area Agreement. This included shared services in areas such as ICT and National Non-Domestic Rates.

3. COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee agreed that the following items would be placed on its work programme for the year".

- Expenditure on agency staff
- Relationship with London Councils
- Performance management information

The Committee agreed that, at later meetings during the municipal year, it should receive updates from officers on other areas, such as emergency planning and business continuity that had previously been scrutinised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. USE OF AGENCY STAFF BY THE COUNCIL

At its meeting on 30 September 2010, the Committee received a presentation from the Business Development Manager on Vendor Neutral Managed Service (VNMS) a tool used within the council to provide Agency workers.

The Committee was informed that the Council in 2006 began a competitive tender process to appoint Vendor Neutral Managed Services (VNMS) for provision of temporary agency workers. Figures provided stated that the council spent in the region of £15million annually using approximately 450 temporary agency workers. The Committee was also informed that the contract for the use of agency staff by the Council started in August 2007 and expired in August 2010 with an option to extend. The contract was extended at that point for a further year until August 2011.

5. NATIONAL INDICATOR OUTTURNS 2009/10

At its meeting on 30 September the Committee received a presentation on the Council's latest performance information from the Policy, Partnership & Performance Manager that outlined how the Council measures performance across a wide range of services and policy areas. This report also provided the Committee with a final outturn for 2009/10 of the National Indicators for which the Council was responsible.

The Committee was informed that within the publication of the new Government's Coalition Agreement was a commitment to reducing 'bureaucracy' and central government led targets. The Council was therefore undertaking a review of Performance Indicators in use across the council with a view to streamlining its approach to performance management.

The report outlined that the overall performance of the Council last year was very good. Of the 84 indicators reported, 61% met their targets, with a further 11% within the 5% 'tolerance range' of targets.

This represented a 75% achievement rate and to put this into a national context, if the council's performance was still benchmarked by the Audit

Commission, these results would probably have placed Havering in the top quartile of all councils in England.

6. CUSTOMER SERVICES PRESENTATION

The Committee received two interactive presentations relating to how Complaints and Customer Services are dealt with within the Council.

The first outlined the process that staff undertook when a corporate complaint was received. The Committee was informed that the service defined a Corporate Complaint as “Any expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, and whether justified or not, from or on behalf of a resident about the Council’s provision of, or failure to provide, a service”.

The Committee made the following comments and suggestions:

- The importance to breaking down categories of complaints in order for Overview & scrutiny Committees to address any issues
- That Members are provided with one email address to direct all their enquiries.
- That complaint data is incorporated in the performance pack

The presentation on the Customer Services Transformation Programme explained the following key features of the programme:

- That the aim was to enable those customers who can to access services by themselves.
- That for those customers who cannot, the council would provide targeted, quality and cost effective services.

The Committee was informed that through better customer services efficiencies in service delivery would be achieved.

7. HAVERING’S MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) LONDON COUNCILS AND OTHER BODIES

The Policy, Partnership & Performance Manager presented a report that examined the Council’s membership of the Local Government Association London Councils and any other bodies which the Council was currently a member of. The report outlined in detail the functions of the LGA and London Councils, and the relative benefits to Havering of being a member of such organisations.

The report also detailed the cost of membership subscription to the LGA. Membership subscriptions were based upon the size of the authority and the population that it represented and thus differed from council to council. In 2009 the LGA froze its member subscriptions whilst at the same time maintaining services to members and continued to lobby on their behalf to safeguard or secure additional government funding.

The presentation led to the Committee agreeing to run a topic group on the Council's relationship with London Councils in order to scrutinise this area in more detail. The Topic Group has since agreed its objectives and the scope of the review which is currently underway.

8. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee received a report that gave a summary of the national policy changes in relation to the local government performance management framework, as well as updating Members on the Council's review of performance management and what the council's new performance framework might look like from 1 April 2011.

9. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INDICATORS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SINGLE DATA LIST FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

An update was taken by the Committee on the Council's review of the amount of performance indicators it currently used. The report also updated Members on the new Single Data List produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government, which had identified 463 pieces of data which local authorities would be expected to collect on behalf of Central Government.

The Committee requested that further information on Performance Indicators relevant to the Value Overview & Scrutiny Committee be produced for members at the next meeting on 14 April 2011.

10. SHARED SERVICES PRESENTATIONS

At its meeting on 8 March 2011, the Committee received two presentations that informed them about Internal Shared Services (ISS) and the Havering & Newham Council ICT Services partnership. The presentation informed the Committee that ISS was due to go live on 4 April 2011.

The Committee was informed that future plans for ISS included the following:

- Bringing in more work
- Providing services to other public sector bodies
- Providing the solution to other London Boroughs

The second presentation informed the Committee of the objectives of the Newham & Havering shared ICT arrangements. The Committee was informed that Havering & Newham had already made significant revenue savings over the last 3 years equal to about £1million and highlighted an estimated £11M ICT cost saving for the 2 boroughs over the next 5 years.

11. RESPONDING TO THE COUNCIL'S EMERGENCY BUDGET AND THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE COALITION AGREEMENT

In both August 2010 and January 2011, the Committee met jointly with the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in order to scrutinise aspects of the Council's proposed budget for the coming year. The meeting scrutinised several issues of relevance to this Committee. These included the sharing of ICT with London Borough of Newham and potential savings in shared procurement via the Council's participation in the East London Shared Services consortium.

At a joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting the Committee considered the Councils' emergency budget and the proposed changes to services and their funding.

Members of the Committee scrutinised a number of issues pertaining to its remit including centralisation of property management, the extent of the Council Tax base, the ending of the Council's subscription to the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) subscription, the value of local land charges and issues relating to facilities management.

12. REQUISITION

In accordance with paragraph 17 of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Rules, a requisition was considered by the Committee on 6 December 2010.

The requisition related to the Council's asset management plan that all council owned property assets were kept under review to ensure that they met the agreed criteria for retention.

The following Cabinet Member decision dated 12 November 2010 was called in:

Council, 20 July 2011

1. To authorise the proposal that land comprising 2 separate sites (as detailed below) be proposed for appropriation to planning purposes under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972, and that such intended appropriation would be advertised in accordance with Section 122(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Land at Ongar Way/Rainham Road, South Hornchurch
- Land at Gooshays Drive, Harold Hill

In summary, the reasons for the requisitions were:

To give Members the opportunity to give detailed consideration of the alternative public uses that both parcels of land may be put to other than development for housing purposes and to consider issues around obtaining planning consent in respect of the land at Gooshays Drive.

Following a scrutiny of the issues concerned, the Committee resolved not to uphold the requisition.