



LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL

2005/6

Members of the Committee

Cllr Catherine Dann (*Chairman*)
Cllr Bruce Baker (*Vice-Chairman*)
Cllr Michael Cox
Cllr Richard Lewis
Cllr Peter Ryerson
Cllr Anthony Way



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

2005/6

Members

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Cllr Catherine Dann</i> <i>Chairman</i> | <i>Health and Social Care</i> |
| <i>Cllr Bruce Baker</i> <i>Vice-Chairman</i> (From October 2005) | <i>Housing</i> |
| <i>Cllr Keith Burrows</i> <i>Vice-Chairman</i> (To October 2005) | <i>Housing</i> |
| <i>Cllr Michael Cox</i> | <i>Environment</i> |
| <i>Cllr Richard Lewis</i> | <i>Corporate Services</i> |
| <i>Cllr Peter Ryerson</i> | <i>Education (including Youth and Leisure Services)</i> |
| <i>Cllr Anthony Way</i> | <i>Community Partnerships and Economic Development</i> |

HILLINGDON'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WEBSITE

You can find us on the Internet at

<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/central/democracy/Scrutiny/index.php>

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 3 |
| WHAT DOES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY DO? | 4 |
| LOOKING BACK OVER 2005/6 | 6 |
| LOOKING FORWARD TO 2006/7 | 8 |
| REPORTS FROM EACH COMMITTEE | |
| Community Partnerships & Economic Development OSC | 13 |
| Corporate Services OSC..... | 15 |
| Education OSC..... | 17 |
| Environment OSC | 19 |
| Health & Social Care OSC | 21 |
| Housing OSC | 23 |
| Planning Performance Working Group..... | 25 |
| THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TEAM..... | 26 |
| APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BUDGET..... | 27 |
| APPENDIX 2: SELECTION CRITERIA FOR MAJOR REVIEWS..... | 28 |
| APPENDIX 3: EXTERNAL WITNESSES PROVIDING EVIDENCE TO OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY IN 2005/6..... | 29 |

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



2005/6 – the fourth year of Overview & Scrutiny in Hillingdon – has undoubtedly been one of both consolidation and progress. Reforms initiated in previous years have been consolidated while new initiatives have developed Overview & Scrutiny further.

Overview & Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) have continued to focus on their major reviews. These reviews provide an opportunity to bring new voices into the policy development process at Hillingdon and open up other public service providers to local democratic oversight. We have benefited from the expert advice of a wide range of external witnesses. These include officers from other authorities, the Borough Commander of the Metropolitan Police, Chief Executives of local NHS organisations, and representatives of voluntary and community groups.

We have continued to balance this in-depth review work with our equally important role in holding the executive to account. Through my role as Chairman of the Coordinating Committee, I am pleased to see how OSCs are focusing their effort on where they can make most impact. In addition to consolidating Overview & Scrutiny's role in formulating the Council's budget, this year has seen Overview & Scrutiny Committees develop a new role overseeing performance and risk management in their respective service departments.

I am therefore pleased to present this report which outlines the tangible contribution made by Overview & Scrutiny during 2005/6. There are numerous achievements of note, including the major review undertaken into Hillingdon Primary Care Trust's financial deficit and the review by the Planning Performance Working Group into the allegations surrounding development control statistics.

Building on these achievements, I am clear that Overview & Scrutiny will continue to develop after the May 2006 elections. I am sure that Overview & Scrutiny will not stand still. The successful 'Spotlight on Scrutiny' event highlighted the positive advances made, but also identified areas for development. In particular, we will all be working to address the issues raised in the Audit Commission's Corporate Assessment.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and the officers involved in Overview & Scrutiny. Without their dedication and enthusiasm, none of the achievements in this report would have been possible. On behalf of all Councillors involved in Overview & Scrutiny I would again like to thank all those who provided evidence during the major reviews.

Councillor Catherine Dann

INTRODUCTION

1. This report covers the work of Hillingdon Council's Overview and Scrutiny function in the municipal year 19th May 2005 to 18th May 2006.
2. Overview & Scrutiny at Hillingdon operates through six service-area Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs):
 - Community Partnerships and Economic Development
 - Corporate Services
 - Education (including the Youth and Leisure Services)
 - Environment
 - Health and Social Care
 - Housing.
3. Each Committee comprises seven Councillors. Membership of each Committee and the allocation of Chairmen is proportional to the size of each political group in Hillingdon.
4. In addition, the Education OSC has a representative from both the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church. There are positions for three parent governors, although two of these are currently vacant.
5. The Chairman of each OSC sits on the Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee. The Coordinating Committee is responsible for approving the annual work programme for each Overview & Scrutiny committee and considers proposals to develop the function within Hillingdon.
6. Terms of reference and procedural rules for all the committees are in the Council's Constitution, which is available on the Council's website at
<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/central/democracy/constitution/index.php>
7. Health Scrutiny work is based on separate legislation approved by Parliament. These powers are stronger than those of OSCs scrutinising the Council's own service departments. NHS organisations have to consult with health Overview & Scrutiny committees about proposed 'substantial' changes to health service provision. NHS bodies are required to provide information to health Overview & Scrutiny committees when requested, and officers from NHS bodies must attend meetings to answer the committee's questions. NHS bodies must respond within 28 days to recommendations made by health Overview & Scrutiny committees.
8. A guide to this legislation is available at
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/06/62/38/04066238.pdf>

9. This year also saw the establishment of the Planning Performance Working Group to review allegations of irregularities in development control statistics and the investigations that had taken place into these allegations. The time-limited working party completed its work in January 2006.

WHAT DOES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY DO?

10. Each Overview & Scrutiny committee holds an average of ten meetings a year. These meetings are held in public, and the agendas and supporting reports are usually available on our website five working days before the meeting.

http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/central/democracy/comm_reports/

11. In short, Overview & Scrutiny:

- Holds the Council's Cabinet to account
- Examines areas of the Council's service provision and performance
- Seeks to ensure that a high quality of service, cost effectiveness and appropriate facilities are available for members of the community
- Makes recommendations to develop services and policies in the interests of developing better services for its residents

Overview & Scrutiny **does NOT**:

- Make day-to-day service decisions
- Investigate individual complaints

12. The work of Overview & Scrutiny divides into two broad areas.

Major review topics (sometimes referred to as 'Overview' items)

13. Each OSC usually undertakes two major reviews each year. These reviews tend to involve long-term policy issues and can range from more internally focused reviews such as security at the Civic Centre to broader thematic reviews such as the Council's approach to promoting road safety. These evidence-based, member-led reviews usually take evidence from a range of witnesses. This may include Council officers, external partners (such as the Police and NHS), officers from other authorities, independent experts and voluntary sector representatives. Appendix 3 lists all of the external witnesses who have given evidence to major reviews during 2005/6.
14. Each review usually makes recommendations to bodies with decision-making powers (mostly the Cabinet and Hillingdon Primary Care Trust Board). OSCs can only make recommendations for action - detailed decision-making and implementation of policy is primarily a matter on which the Cabinet and the PCT lead.

15. Each Committee selects their major reviews at the start of the Council year using the criteria in appendix two. Suggestions usually come from Members themselves, although in some instances recommendations may come from the Cabinet, local NHS organisations, or motions passed at full council. Suggestions from members of the public are welcomed and encouraged.

Scrutinising decision-making and service delivery

16. The other side of Overview & Scrutiny is examining the work of the Executive. This is primarily the Cabinet of the Council but in the case of health scrutiny also the Primary Care Trust (PCT) Board.

17. This work involves monitoring and, where necessary, detailed investigation of the following:

- items on Hillingdon Cabinet's Forward Plan for decision-making
- decisions made by Hillingdon Cabinet that OSCs have the right to 'call-in' for further consideration
- the way Hillingdon Council service departments are spending their budgets
- Hillingdon Council's budget setting process for the following financial year
- Hillingdon Council service department plans
- Best Value reviews, audit and inspection reports.

18. The Health and Social Care OSC may also deal with a number of other matters affecting the health of people living in Hillingdon, including any substantial variation in health service provision.

LOOKING BACK OVER 2005/6

Achievements

19. Overview & Scrutiny has continued to develop during 2005/6 and the year has seen a number of achievements. The following provides a flavour of some of the notable successes. Fuller information is provided in the individual Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) reports later on.
20. Each OSC has continued to make considerable progress in the development and completion of their work programme. Committees have continued to focus on their major reviews and avoid the temptation to focus only on Cabinet Forward Plan items. Fourteen major reviews have been completed with Housing OSC also undertaking two further 'mini' reviews. Seven reports have been passed to the Cabinet or the PCT Board for consideration.
21. The OSCs have continued to balance these in-depth reviews with their important work of holding the Cabinet to account. In line with recommendations made by the Audit Commission several years ago, the Committees have sought to focus their interventions on areas where they can make a difference. For example, using the expertise and understanding gained from their in-depth reviews, the Committees have contributed to the formulation of the Council's budget for 2006/7 and 'called-in' four Cabinet decisions. OSCs have also considered the service plans of all of their respective departments.
22. A significant achievement has been the establishment and consolidation of Overview & Scrutiny's role in performance management. As part of their role in holding the Executive to account each OSC now considers the Quarterly Performance Report for their respective service departments. This role has won external praise.
23. As part of the Annual Audit Plan for 2005/06, the Audit Commission carried out an Audit of Performance Management. This evaluation of current performance management arrangements at Hillingdon praised the positive contribution by Overview & Scrutiny. Inspectors found *'Overview and Scrutiny play a significant role in the overall monitoring of council performance and procedures for identifying and tackling cross cutting issues have been developed'*.
24. In addition, Overview & Scrutiny is developing a role in the risk management process as part of the Council's new Risk Management Strategy. Corporate Services OSC have been placed as the 'guardians' of the risk management process in the Council, and the Health & Social Care OSC have considered the major risks in Social Services as part of this process.
25. The Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee have agreed a series of measures to develop further the function at Hillingdon. These include:

- A new agenda format to reinforce the difference in role between Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet
- The production of handling briefs with suggested questions and extra background material for some meetings with complex agendas
- The scrutiny 'toolkit' which provides a range of information for officers and Members and is now available on the Council's intranet 'Horizon'
- There has been an increased attendance of Cabinet Members at Overview & Scrutiny meetings
- Revised arrangements for the seating of officers at Overview & Scrutiny meetings

'Spotlight on Scrutiny' Event

26. A highlight of the Overview & Scrutiny year was the 'Spotlight on Scrutiny' event held on the 22nd March 2006. The event sought to look back and reflect on the experience of Overview & Scrutiny in Hillingdon since its establishment in 2002 and look forward to developments after the elections in May. The event was well attended. Participants included Overview & Scrutiny members, the Leader of the Council, senior officers, and the Borough Commander of the Metropolitan Police.
27. Participants heard from a panel of speakers on a range of topics. Darra Singh, Chief Executive of neighbouring London Borough of Ealing, provided an external perspective on what makes 'good' scrutiny. Jo Dungey from the Local Government Information Unit provided an insight into future challenges for Overview & Scrutiny including the proposed 'call for action' and increased role for Overview & Scrutiny in the Council's community leadership work. Councillor Ray Puddifoot, Leader of the Council, outlined what made Cabinet take notice of Overview & Scrutiny reports and also outlined his vision for how Overview & Scrutiny may change after the elections.
28. Attendees broke into smaller discussion groups to reflect on what has worked well in Overview & Scrutiny at Hillingdon and what has not. Discussion groups identified positive suggestions on how the function could improve. Discussions were positive, and the event was productive in stimulating ideas on this issue. The consensus was that Overview & Scrutiny has significantly developed since its creation from a standing start. However, all agreed that further work is required for Overview & Scrutiny to fulfil its full potential. Many of these issues are discussed later in this report.

Staffing Developments

29. On 27th January 2005, Council agreed a motion on realising the value of Overview & Scrutiny. In particular, the motion called for the resources allocated to Overview & Scrutiny to be ring-fenced and protected, and for

detailed proposals to be brought forward to enhance the support available to the OSCs.

30. Following this motion, the vacant Scrutiny Manager post was unfrozen and filled as a revised role of Democratic Services Manager. Funding was provided for the appointment of an additional Scrutiny Advisor.
31. While this increase in staff is undoubtedly positive, it must be considered alongside the large volume of non-Overview & Scrutiny work undertaken by the team. Two of the four Scrutiny Advisors spend about two-thirds of their time on non-Overview & Scrutiny work. The total time allocated to Overview & Scrutiny work in the Team, including that of the Head of Scrutiny and Members' Services, therefore equates to about 2.5 full-time equivalents.
32. This issue has been a matter of great concern to us - the Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee - and we have considered this issue on several occasions this year. While the achievements outlined above, and presented in further detail later on, testify to the continued positive development of Overview & Scrutiny at Hillingdon, we remain concerned that the level of resources available for supporting Overview & Scrutiny is less than at many other authorities. As such, the achievements and strength of Overview & Scrutiny at Hillingdon are likely to reflect this.
33. To help address this issue, the Head of Scrutiny & Members' Services is taking forward proposals to reorganise the work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Team. It is hoped that proposals will raise the total level of staff resource devoted to O&S work to nearer three full-time equivalents and insulate O&S work to a much greater extent than now from unexpected swings in non-O&S work.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2006/7

34. Some solid achievements in 2005/6 provide a good foundation for the incoming Council after the May 2006 elections. However, despite the achievements above, we are aware of the room for improvement to realise the full potential of Overview & Scrutiny at Hillingdon. Through our strategic role, we, the Coordinating Committee, will be looking to continue the development of Overview & Scrutiny and in particular address the issues identified in the Audit Commission's Corporate Assessment.

Audit Commission Corporate Assessment

35. The Audit Commission's Corporate Assessment of the authority was a significant event in the corporate calendar at Hillingdon. This involved eight inspectors spending two weeks at the Council in November 2005 to evaluate how the Council is performing.
36. The inspectors' assessment of Overview & Scrutiny was as follows:

'The effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny is mixed and its role in policy development is underdeveloped. There is some evidence of challenge and contribution to policy making such as recommendations made regarding grant-making and service level agreements (SLAs). However, engagement between cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny is inconsistent and its utilisation as a resource has not been fully realised, for example on the children's agenda. The current arrangements do not rigorously hold the cabinet to account.'

37. While we fully accept that there is scope for improvement, it is disappointing that the Audit Commission reached this verdict without attending any OSC meetings or speaking to officers from the Overview & Scrutiny Team.
38. In looking forward to 2006/7 and responding to these findings, it is also worth remembering the positive conclusions of a 2004 IDeA Peer Review and the 2005 Audit of Performance Management undertaken by different inspectors from the Audit Commission.
39. The development of Overview & Scrutiny will continue next year. The 'Spotlight on Scrutiny' event was successful in reflecting on what has worked less well and identified positive and practical ideas to address this. We will be asking the Overview & Scrutiny Team to develop these ideas further. Potential areas of work include:
- Increasing public engagement in Overview & Scrutiny
 - Selecting review topics with greater public interest
 - Increasing officer understanding of Overview & Scrutiny
 - Better engagement between Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny
 - Greater 'parity of esteem' between Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny with Overview & Scrutiny taken more seriously

The 'new' Council

40. Discussions at the 'Spotlight on Scrutiny' event also looked at how Overview & Scrutiny may be organised after the elections in May 2006. The current Leader of the Council outlined his initial proposals on how Overview & Scrutiny could be restructured if the Conservative Group won an overall majority. We heard that such changes may include the creation of a Cabinet Business Committee, an Audit Committee and an External Affairs Committee.

Health Scrutiny Support Programme

41. In recognition of the additional requirements of health scrutiny, the Centre for Public Scrutiny received government funding to provide five days of consultancy support for authorities with health scrutiny responsibilities. Hillingdon has used this support for a variety of projects to further develop the function. This developmental work will continue in 2006/7.

Report from each Committee

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OSC



*Cllr Anthony Way
Chairman*

*Cllr Josephine Barrett
Cllr Frank Filgate*

*Cllr John Hensley
Cllr Richard Lewis*

*Cllr John Major Vice-Chairman
Cllr Norman Nunn-Price*

The Working of the Local Strategic Partnership

Hillingdon Partners – the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – was set up in 2001. Five years on, we decided to undertake a review of how the Partnership has worked and think about its future development. We heard evidence from a range of witnesses representing the voluntary, community, business and skills sectors. We heard from the Borough Commander of the Metropolitan Police, local police officers and members of the public when looking at the neighbourhood and partnership initiative.

Our review found a positive story to tell about the partnership, although we heard there is room for improvement and development. Our recommendations focus on accountability, engagement, communication, and future challenges, including the need to build more partnership working at neighbourhood level. Cabinet considered our report on the 9th March 2006 and asked officers to produce a report with a fuller evaluation of our recommendations.

Wider Participation in Overview & Scrutiny

For our second review we agreed to look at how public engagement in Overview & Scrutiny could be increased. We considered evidence on the levels of public engagement with Overview & Scrutiny and the democratic process generally in Hillingdon. We also looked at mechanisms used by other authorities. Following our decision to extend our review into the LSP we only had time to issue an interim report. This has been sent to the other OSCs for their input. Given the importance of this issue, we hope that Overview & Scrutiny can return to this review after the elections.

Town Centre Partnerships

We also concluded our work on reviewing Town Centre Partnerships in Hillingdon that had commenced in 2004 at the request of Cabinet. Our final report draws out good-practice principles for the town centre management

and the Council's support of Town Centre Partnerships. We are firmly of the view that a new vision and a more proactive approach are needed to the management of Hayes Town Centre Partnership. Copies of our report have gone to the Leader, Cabinet member for Performance, Partnerships & Community Safety, the Chief Executive, and Head of the Policy Team.

Voluntary Sector

We continued our successful work on voluntary sector issues. At Cabinet's request, we reviewed voluntary grant recommendations on 18th January 2006. Three voluntary groups (Age Concern Hillingdon, Hillingdon Somali Women's Group, and Heathrow Travel-care) attended to present their case for funding above the proposed recommendations. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance, Partnerships and Community Safety were also present. Cabinet accepted our recommendations.

Other Scrutiny Activity

In addition to our major reviews we also submitted comments to Cabinet on the roll forward of Community Strategy Targets, and reviewed an update on the Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy. As a result, we wrote to the London Development Agency asking for a reconsideration of their decision to withdraw funding in 2006/7 from the Heathrow City Programme youth business incubators.

CORPORATE SERVICES OSC



*Cllr Richard Lewis
Chairman*

*Cllr David Bishop Vice-Chairman
Cllr Steve Carey*

*Cllr Brian Crowe
Cllr Paul Harmsworth*

*Cllr Phoday Jarjussey
Cllr Mike Usher*

Customer Access (Complaints)

We decided to examine the Council's performance in relation to complaints because we felt that how the Council interacts and serves its customers is of paramount importance. We were concerned that an IDeA Peer Review in 2004 had identified a low and decreasing satisfaction with complaints handling in Hillingdon. Our review focused on three specific aspects of complaints performance: current Hillingdon practice, best practice outside the Borough, and future initiatives for Hillingdon.

Our research included a survey of complaints officers, a review of the number and type of complaints received, a witness session with the Assistant Ombudsman, and a visit to Camden Council. This research informed a range of evidence-based recommendations which went to April's Cabinet meeting for consideration. We believe these recommendations can make a real difference to customer access and complaints handling thereby also making a positive contribution to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment's direction of travel.

Information Given to Residents About the Council Tax

We also decided to review the information given to residents about the Council Tax. For many residents the Council Tax bill and accompanying leaflet is the only communication they receive that explains what their council tax is used for and how their money is spent. The Council Tax leaflet is therefore an important communication.

We decided to conduct this review through a small sub-group of three Members to work with officers outside of formal Committee meetings. We gathered a wide range of examples from other authorities, and we engaged the Council's Communications Unit to consider these in the context of our current format. We agreed that the revised leaflet should give greater emphasis to advertising the direct debit payment facility; promoting the

discounts, exemptions and benefits available; and the contact details for the Council Tax Office.

Other Scrutiny Activity

As in previous years, we led Overview & Scrutiny's role in examining the Council's budgetary proposals for 2006/7. In addition to examining the corporate implications of the proposals, we also examined the areas relating to the Chief Executive's Office and Finance & Property. Following the Council's new Corporate Risk Management Process, we have strengthened our role in risk management and in reviewing the Council's audit processes. As part of this role we examined the internal audit strategic plan; the internal audit annual report; the anti-fraud and corruption strategy; and the annual statement of internal control.

We considered two call-ins of Cabinet decisions. In February we considered a Party call-in of the Cabinet decision relating to the purchase of the Great Barn, Harmondsworth. Given the current financial position we agreed that it was not possible for the authority to purchase the barn, but asked Cabinet to examine options for external organisations to purchase the barn. Cabinet agreed with this request. In March we considered a Party call-in of the decision to select a sole provider for blue-collar agency staff within Environment and Consumer Protection. After discussing the issue, and hearing further reassurances from officers, we agreed to accept the original Cabinet decision.

In addition, we commented on the Hillingdon Youth Justice Plan before it was sent to Cabinet. We also examined the corporate implications of the Disability Equality Scheme and received an update on the Equality Standard for Local Government.

We also examined the issue of security at the Civic Centre. This involved an inspection of the building and a visit to the CCTV room.

EDUCATION OSC



*Cllr Peter Ryerson
Chairman*

*Reverend Doug Cave
Cllr Peter Curling Vice- Chairman
Cllr Brian Crowe*

*Cllr Mike Gettleson
Cllr John Hensley
Tony Little*

*Cllr Andrew Retter
Cllr Paramjit Sethi
Vanessa Thornborough*

Sport & Physical Education Strategy

We examined the emerging strategic proposals for sport and physical activity in the community to be incorporated into the Council's Sports and Physical Activity Strategy. In particular, we looked at the issues of health promotion, participation, and the development of Hillingdon as a major regional sports hub.

We took evidence from a wide range of partners including Hillingdon Sports Council; representatives of local sports clubs and voluntary organisations; Brunel University; Hillingdon Primary Care Trust; and the Greater London Authority. Using this evidence, we made 26 recommendations to Cabinet. If accepted, we believe these recommendations will make a real difference to both the promotion and improvement of sports and physical activity provision throughout Hillingdon, and ensure Hillingdon maximises the benefits from the 2012 Olympic Games.

Progression from Primary to Secondary School

We decided to examine the issues surrounding progression from Primary to Secondary School following a request from the Cabinet Member for Education Youth and Leisure. We heard that academic standards 'dip' during the transition phase between Primary and Secondary school. Although this is a national pattern, research indicates the problem is worse in Hillingdon than the national average.

We issued an interim report on this issue and hope to return to this review in 2006/7.

Other Scrutiny Activity

As part of our enhanced role in scrutinising the performance of Education, Youth and Leisure (EYL) we have considered the department's Quarterly Performance Reports. We also considered the draft sport & recreation strategy and the best value review of school improvement. We commented on the budget proposals for EYL which were passed to Cabinet for consideration. In particular, we told Cabinet of our opposition to the proposed £315,000 cut in the Music Service's budget, and were therefore pleased when this proposal was removed from the final budget approved by Council.

We held a joint meeting with the Health & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee to examine the status of the work to integrate Children's Services. We also received an update on the Joint Area Review (JAR) of Children's Services.

In March we considered a Party call-in of the Cabinet decision relating to the selection of an operator of Uxbridge Lido sports and leisure centre. After discussing the issue and hearing further information from officers, we decided to accept the Cabinet decision.

ENVIRONMENT OSC



*Cllr Michael Cox
Chairman*

*Cllr Bruce Baker until October
Cllr Ann Banks*

*Cllr Tony Burles
Cllr Janet Duncan Vice-Chairman*

*Cllr Norman Nunn-Price
Cllr Andrew Retter from October
Cllr Michael White*

Road Safety

Our review examined Hillingdon Council's Road Safety Strategy and the services provided by local, regional and national agencies to reduce deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

We took evidence from a range of partners and stakeholders, including correspondence from members of the public. On the basis of this evidence, we issued an interim report, which included a request for additional resources to enable the Council to promote road safety activities more effectively. We are therefore pleased to report that Council has approved funding for four more Road Safety Officers to give this borough its full complement of Road Safety Officers.

Our final report is due for completion in April.

Local Development Framework

We decided to retain the Local Development Framework (LDF) in our work programme for a second year to enable Overview & Scrutiny to make a significant contribution to the development of this key Council strategy which will shape the future of the borough until 2016.

Given the wide ranging issues covered by the LDF documents, we focused on four areas: retail and town centre policies; housing densities & new housing development; parking standards; and health provision. Our comments and recommendations over a series of meetings were incorporated into the final submission LDF documents, which were formally approved at full Council on 16th March.

Planning Performance Working Group

We established the Working Group to investigate the allegations surrounding development control statistics (see below for further detail).

Other Scrutiny Activity

We continued our work scrutinising the performance of both the Environment & Consumer Protection and the Planning & Transportation Departments. As part of this role, we received the budget and service plans, and the performance management and risk management reports for both departments.

In relation to Cabinet business, we also commented on the Forward Plan item relating to the New Roads and Street Works Act Surplus. Cabinet noted our comments. We also considered a Party Call-in of the Proposed Highway Capital Maintenance Programme 2005/6. The Cabinet Member noted our comments but decided to uphold the original decision to enable the programme of works to continue without further delay.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE OSC



*Cllr Catherine Dann
Chairman*

Cllr Janet Gardner

Cllr Phoday Jarjussey

Cllr Andrew Vernazza

Cllr Shirley Harper-O'Neill

Cllr John Major

Cllr Michael White Vice-Chairman

Hillingdon Primary Care Trust's (PCT) Financial Deficit

Our major piece of work this year has centred on the financial position of Hillingdon PCT, which is projecting the largest financial deficit of any PCT in the country. We took evidence from a range of key stakeholders including the Chief Executive and Chair of Hillingdon PCT, and the Chief Executive of Hillingdon Hospital. Cabinet considered our interim report on this issue in December and accepted our recommendations. Following a further witness session we issued a detailed report on this issue which our Chairman, Councillor Catherine Dann, presented to the PCT Board.

We have written to the Secretary of State of Health expressing our concerns arising from the review, however, at the time of writing this report we had yet to receive a response. Through our recommendations we will continue to maintain an ongoing interest in this matter of great concern to Hillingdon residents.

The Impact of Heathrow Airport on the Hillingdon Health & Social Care Economy

As our second review we examined the impact of Heathrow and heard evidence from both the PCT and Social Services. We heard that both organisations face significant costs as a result of the airport, many of which are not met by additional government funding. Our report notes the action already being undertaken by the Leader of the Council on this issue, and we recommended that all possible steps are taken to lobby central government on this issue.

National Service Framework for Older People

In September 2005, Cabinet considered our 2004/5 review into the National Service Framework for Older People. Our report was well received and

Cabinet accepted all of our recommendations, which aimed to promote a single point of access to intermediate care services and greater joined up working between health and social services. This included the appointment of an intermediate care coordinator across health and social care.

Other Scrutiny Activity

In addition to our major reviews we have continued with our scrutiny of the Council's Social Services Department including the department's budget proposals for 2006/7. We also heard about major risks facing the department and developed a new role examining the quarterly performance reports. Following our work in previous years, we were consulted about the latest proposals to modernise learning disability services and held a joint meeting with the Education OSC to examine the integration of Children's Services. We also questioned officers about the modernisation of home care services.

Our work under our Health Scrutiny responsibilities has continued to expand and accounts for a large volume of our activity. We have continued to receive updates about the separate proposals for cancer and burns & plastics services at Mount Vernon Hospital and also the redevelopment of Hillingdon Hospital. We held a special meeting to discuss developments at Harefield Hospital which was attended by representatives from other health OSCs. We also called the Chief Executive of Hillingdon Hospital to answer our concerns about a recent cleanliness inspection undertaken by the Healthcare Commission.

We have commented on the performance of the three local NHS Trusts – Hillingdon PCT, Hillingdon Hospital, and the Royal Brompton & Harefield - as part of a new role for the Committee in the Healthcare Commission's Annual Health check.

HOUSING OSC



*Cllr Bruce Baker
Chairman from October 2005*

*Cllr Keith Burrows
Chairman to October 2005*

*Cllr Josephine Barrett Vice-Chairman Cllr Mike Usher to February Cllr Marion Way
Cllr Ann Banks Cllr Anthony Way from February Cllr Elaine Webb
Cllr Janet Gardner*

Hillingdon Homes' Performance

Two years into its operation, we decided it would be a good time to review Hillingdon Homes' relationship with the Council. We believed it would be a good opportunity to examine and influence the quality of services to tenants and leaseholders in Hillingdon.

Our review concluded that Hillingdon Homes has a good performance base and is performing well in the great majority of areas.

The Council's Housing Strategy

Our review covered the process of developing the new Housing Strategy, including a review of the need for housing in Hillingdon and the methods of developing affordable housing in the borough. The Committee's final report will provide an early draft of the new Housing Strategy for 2006 – 2009, which will go to Cabinet in June 2006.

Colne Park Caravan Site

We conducted a 'mini' review of the need to continue provision of Colne Park Caravan Site and the attendant resource implications. The caravan site houses twenty Traveller households and is an integral part of the strategic provision for Travellers in the borough. Cabinet considered our report and recommendations in April.

Housing Needs Frontline Service Delivery

We also decided to conduct a 'mini' review arising from questions raised by Councillors about responses given to members of the public who approach the Council about housing needs matters.

Over a series of meetings we received evidence on the Housing Advice and Options services, including a question and answer session with frontline staff. We were impressed by the quality, motivation and commitment of the frontline officers who gave evidence to the Committee.

Other Scrutiny Activity

In addition to our review topics, we continued to receive quarterly progress reports on a number of service areas, including: Social Services and Housing integration, Locata, Housing Benefit Performance, Hillingdon Homes' performance, risk management, and the Supporting People Strategy. We also commented on the budget proposals for Housing Services as part of the Council's budget-setting process.

PLANNING PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP



*Cllr Michael Cox
Chairman*

*Cllr Richard Barnes from November
Cllr Keith Burrows to October*

*Cllr Catherine Dann
Cllr Janet Gardner*

Cllr Anthony Way

Planning Performance – Continuous Improvement

Following a request from Cabinet, the Environment OSC asked the Working Group it had set up in 2004/5 to investigate the issues raised in the Audit Commission's report on alleged irregularities in development control statistics in Hillingdon.

We met seven times to consider evidence between September 2005 and January 2006. As all members of the Working Group were (deliberately) Councillors with no involvement in Planning Committees, we decided to seek an expert witness to advise the Working Group on good planning practice. Recommendations from the Local Government Association and ODPM led to Graham Jones, President of the Planning Officers Society and Director of Strategic Policy at the London Borough of Harrow, being invited and accepting this role.

This issue is not simply a matter of arid numbers but concerned the level of service the Council are providing and the professionalism of its service. We were therefore pleased to be able to respond to the Cabinet's request and to report back as quickly as possible bearing in mind the complexity of the issues.

This thorough scrutiny cleared the air and drew lessons in relation to issues that had hung over the Council and the Planning and Transportation Group. Cabinet largely accepted our recommendations.

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TEAM

The Overview and Scrutiny Team are based at the Civic Centre and are part of Democratic Services in the Chief Executive's Office

Guy Fiegehen

Head of Scrutiny and Members' Services
01895 277733

Richard Brown

Democratic Services Manager
01895 250807

Member Induction & Training,
Mayor's & Group Office Management

Martine Cazeau

Scrutiny Advisor
01895 250692

Environment OSC
Housing OSC

Jane Coker

Democratic Management Officer
01895 250813

Education Appeals,
General Support

Maureen Colledge

Scrutiny Advisor
01895 277488

Community Partnerships & Economic
Development OSC
Planning Performance Working Group (now
completed)

David Coombs

Scrutiny Advisor
01895 250833

Health and Social Care OSC
Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

Charles Francis

Scrutiny Advisor
01895 556454

Corporate Services OSC
Education OSC

The Team can be contacted by telephone at the numbers above or as follows:-

| | |
|--------|--|
| E-mail | Scrutiny@hillingdon.gov.uk |
| Fax | 01895 277373 |
| Post | Overview and Scrutiny Team London Borough of Hillingdon 3E/05 Civic Centre High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW |

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUDGET

A budget of £10,000 was agreed for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to spend in support of their research and other activity. This money is controlled by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Services, who submits regular reports to the Coordinating Committee. The Committee's role is to advise on overall direction and priorities.

Just under half of this budget was spent in 2005/6.

2005/6 Overview & Scrutiny expenditure

| Item | £ |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Budget Scrutiny Seminar - 15 th November 2005 | 1,000 |
| 2. Stakeholder Management & Partnership Working – External Conference for 1 Chairman – 8 th December 2005 | 385 |
| 3. Democratic Health Network Membership - 2005 | 2,476 |
| 4. O&S Stocktaking Event | 250 |
| Total | 4,111 |

APPENDIX 2: SELECTION CRITERIA FOR MAJOR REVIEWS

(a) Possible reasons for Scrutiny

1. Strong public interest
2. Government pressure
3. Included in Hillingdon Improvement Programme
e.g. performance standards poor/below target
4. Inspection report recommendation

(b) Scope for making an impact

1. Area within Council's control/influence
2. High impact on residents
3. Expertise available on which to draw
4. Good practice available elsewhere

Topics that score highest should have priority for consideration

APPENDIX 3: EXTERNAL WITNESSES PROVIDING EVIDENCE TO OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY IN 2005/6

Community Partnerships & Economic Development OSC

- Rachel Davies - Vice Chair of Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce, Principal of Uxbridge College
- Tony Dunn - Chimes Shopping Centre Manager
- Peter Sale - Hillingdon Education Business Partnership
- Chris Commerford & Chris Beattie - Age Concern Hillingdon
- Mick May - Groundwork Trust
- Chief Superintendent Mark Toland - Metropolitan Police
- Sergeant Nigel Evans - Metropolitan Police
- Sergeant Kirsty Hayes - Metropolitan Police
- Sue Curley - Community representative on the Uxbridge Safer Neighbourhood People's Panel
- Hawa Hashi - Hillingdon Somali Women's Group
- Sandy Cox - Heathrow Travel Care

Corporate Services OSC

- Richard Shaw - Assistant Local Government Ombudsman

Education OSC

- Clive Hamilton - Hillingdon Sports Council
- Paul Dimmock - Brunel University
- Peter Cook - Ickenham Cricket Club
- Robert Riddleston - Eastcote Hockey Club
- John Thirkettle - Community Centres
- Sarah Durner - Healthy Hillingdon
- Andrew Knight - Healthy Hillingdon
- Ian Nichol - West London Alliance
- Inspector David Partridge Metropolitan Police

Environment OSC

- Chris Feltham - Transport for London
- Christine Fitzgerald - Transport for London
- Chief Inspector Maurice Hartnett - Metropolitan Police

- PC Neil Corfield - Metropolitan Police
- Geoff Williams - London Fire Brigade
- Richard Walker - Hillingdon Motorists' Forum
- Kevin Clinton - Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- Simon Ettinghausen - Bexley Council
- Sue Brown - Buckinghamshire County Council
- David Condon - Buckinghamshire County Council

Health & Social Care OSC

- David McVittie - Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust
- Stephen Meechan - Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust
- Elizabeth Palmer - Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust
- Andrew Morgan* - Hillingdon Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Dr Hilary Pickles – Hillingdon PCT
- Elaine Kerr* - Hillingdon PCT
- Russell Barnes- Heath* - Hillingdon PCT
- Terry Kelly - Hillingdon PCT
- Siobhan Clarke - Hillingdon PCT
- Graeme Betts* - Hillingdon PCT
- Sarah Pond* - Hillingdon PCT
- Robert Craig - Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust
- Lucy Davies - Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust
- Patrick Mitchell - Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust
- Sir Michael Partridge – on behalf of the Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust
- Helen Robinson - North West London Strategic Health Authority

**no longer working at Hillingdon PCT*

Housing OSC

No external witnesses

Planning Performance Working Group

- Graham Jones - President of the Planning Officers Society and Director of Strategic Policy at the London Borough of Harrow
- Mike Haworth-Maden** - Audit Commission

- Rob Clarke** - Former member of staff
- Mr Edington** - Local Resident

*** written evidence only*