

Overview and Scrutiny

**Annual Report &
Forward Plan**

2006/2007

MEMBERSHIP OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD FOR 2005/06

In alphabetical order



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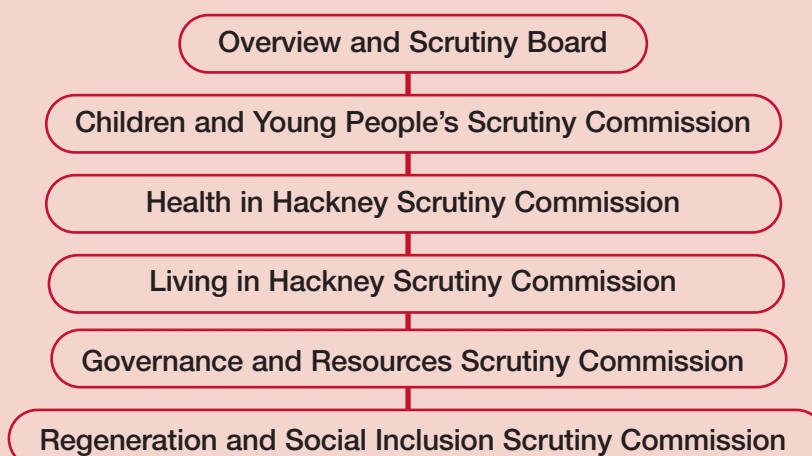


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Overview & Scrutiny Structure



Introduction from Scrutiny Chairs

The last year has been an extremely important one for the London Borough of Hackney and a busy one for Scrutiny. The Council has reshaped its top management structure, with a new top management team now in place. The Strategic Partnership – Team Hackney – has been refreshed and is performing much more effectively. There have been sustained improvements in performance in key services. A number of major decisions affecting the borough have taken place, some of which have been reviewed by the scrutiny function, including the 2012 Olympics, the creation of the Arms Length Management Organisation for Housing and the introduction of the new Licensing Laws for alcohol sales. We believe the Scrutiny function has played an important role in ensuring Hackney rises to the challenge by assisting the Council and its partners in shaping policy and practices through a thorough and effective Scrutiny programme and fulfilling its ‘critical friend’ role to Cabinet and Council alike.

Over the course of the year we have carried out a number of detailed and productive in-depth reviews, covering issues that are of high importance on both the local and national agendas. This work has included a review of the implementation of the Government’s City Academies programme in the borough, an assessment of the impact of the new Licensing Laws on the health of the community, through to reviews of Street Market Provision in Hackney and Voluntary Sector Grants. In addition we have influenced many aspects of Council Policy and Performance with a series of exercises conducted in order to monitor high level issues such as the Olympic Bid, work on Equalities across the Council and data on how the Council is performing.

Scrutiny has fulfilled its obligation to hold Cabinet to account through the active monitoring of performance, and the delivery of Council programmes. Several issues were considered at pre-decision stage by Scrutiny, so in general there has not been the need for the call-in of items. The Council has referred issues directly to Scrutiny for consideration.

One of the long term priorities of Scrutiny continues to be securing the increased engagement and participation in its work by the community. This year has seen Scrutiny make significant progress in this area, engaging with not only health partners, local police and the Learning Trust but by extending this to residents, shoppers, market traders, local businesses, representatives from the voluntary sector and various important community groups such as Disability Hackney and Interlink. This increased level of stakeholder participation is welcomed and we look forward to it continuing into the next Councils series of Scrutiny reviews and investigations.

Following on from this we have also renewed our efforts to communicate to the community the work that is carried out by Scrutiny, its purpose and its aims. Through this we hope to

further engage more sectors of the community, inform residents of the processes and procedures in place, outcomes that we reach and how all residents can get involved if they want to. We recognise the essential contributions from Officers, Councillors and community members who have provided evidence to the various Commissions and would like to express our thanks to all involved.

Furthermore as Overview and Scrutiny Members we welcome efforts being made by Officers to further develop Overview and Scrutiny so that we can continue to build on its numerous successes achieved to date. We understand that options for improvement based on our experiences during this Council will be considered with the new Membership in May, including a statement of local principles for scrutiny.

One area where further improvement may be achieved is the way in which the outcomes of the Scrutiny process have the impact they deserve. Recommendations need to be considered by the Executive, and where appropriate, fed into the Council's resource allocation process. This has implications for the timing of some reviews, and also for the need for timely advice from Chief Officers on policy and funding options. It is recognised that any scrutiny recommendations that have significant budgetary implications will need to be concluded by around October if they are to influence major change in resource allocation as soon as the next financial year. The recommendations later in this report seek to address these issues. Additionally, the Executive may wish to engage with Scrutiny more pro-actively, as they have with the Review of Market Provision, so that Scrutiny's input can directly inform decision making.

In conclusion it is felt that the ambitious Scrutiny programme of the past year, within a limited time frame, has been carried out effectively, producing relevant realistic and outcome driven recommendations that will facilitate change and assist the Council in moving forward. The Scrutiny function in Hackney has developed and expanded over the past year and we look forward to the prospect of welcoming new Members to take Scrutiny forward securing Scrutiny's position as a robust and effective part of the democratic process in Hackney.

Update on recommendations and implementation from last year

We want to make sure that the recommendations we make are acted upon, and therefore regularly request updates on progress following our reviews. Shown below are examples of how our scrutiny reviews have resulted in changes to the way the Council operates.

A. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF TURKISH AND CARIBBEAN PUPILS. (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

The Learning Trust have appointed Dr Maud Blair to oversee its strategy for Ethnic Minority Achievement. The Commission welcomed the involvement of Turkish speaking parents in parental partnerships, volunteering and Education Forums in line with its recommendations. It also recognised the active recruitment of classroom assistants, the work of supplementary schools, homework clubs and the targeting of nursery education access through SureStart.

The Commission welcomed the development of mentoring schemes for pupils of Caribbean heritage in years 9, 10 and 11 and the use of NRF funding in primary schools to employ link workers to encourage parental participation in schools to raise ethnic minority achievement



B. TENANCY MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS REVIEW. (GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

An update was given at the 20 February meeting on Tenancy Management Organisations. The Commission was given a detailed report on Progress on the Action Plan to date, which included the areas of finance and management. The Commission noted that there was still more work to be done, especially with regards to the management and monitoring of the TMOs, but the relationship between the TMOs and the Council has substantially improved.

The Commission did raise concerns regarding a fraud investigation into the Lordship South TMO. The Commission requested that once the Audit and Anti-Fraud investigation has been completed, that Housing report back to the Commission on the findings.

C. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF COUNCIL STAFF. (GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

The recommendations made as part of this review are informing the Council's recruitment and retention strategy. As suggested, each directorate now produces



recruitment plans to identify where vacancies exist and their plans to fill them. A number of initiatives have been introduced to look at how the Council uses secondments to 'grow its own' staff, rather than having to always look outside the borough. The application process for more junior staff is being simplified to make it easier for local people to apply for jobs within the Council, and Job Centre Plus now work on behalf of the Council to make employment opportunities more accessible.

A greater analysis of the role and cost of agency staff was carried out across the Council. The Commission has sought to continue its oversight role during the year, but has not as yet had an opportunity to review progress. The Commission will expect such an update to be provided to Members in due course.

D. TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. (REGENERATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

Members were keen to review progress on recommendations made in March 2005 that the Council expand its provision for work experience and training contracts; increase the profile of the Council as an employer; and support mentoring of young people. Members were pleased to hear that several new projects have been commissioned that address these concerns, including Council employees'



involvement in the Hackney Schools Mentoring Programme, the development of Enterprise Challenge Days for students to develop skills for the workplace and a more co-ordinated approach to work experience placements.

E. ISSUES FACING YOUNG OFFENDERS, PRISONERS AND RECIDIVISTS. (REGENERATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

The Commission monitored progress on recommendations made in March 2005 that the Council and other statutory agencies take steps to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime through educational programmes; and provide greater support for prisoners on release in terms of housing, mentoring, drug treatment and employment to lessen their chances of reoffending. Members heard that progress is being made in these areas. A lot of work is being undertaken through the Learning Trust to educate young people on the consequences of crime through workshops and plays and to raise their aspirations. The Drug Action Team funds treatment programmes and mentoring for both long-term prisoners and those on release. However a lack of employment and appropriate housing remain serious issues for prisoners on release.

F. SICKLE CELL & THALASSAEMIA. (HEALTH IN HACKNEY SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

An update detailing progress on implementing the recommendations made by the Commission was tabled at its November 2005 meeting and following a number of enquiries being made a further response to follow up questions was made in February 2006.

At the conclusion of this exercise the Commission felt that a number of evidenced improvements had been observed in this service area most notably in respect of developing pre-arranged and agreed, cross agency, care packages and pathways for specific patients and their families known to be at risk of suffering



severe episodes. In addition the Commission welcomed the acknowledgement that the National Blood Service now appears both willing and able to host annual registration events in the Town Hall Square.

G. CORONARY HEART DISEASE. (HEALTH IN HACKNEY SCRUTINY COMMISSION)

It is anticipated that the Health Scrutiny will review the recommendations made in respect of this investigation in the 06/07 municipal year. The Commission has been encouraged by the fact that the promotion issues it sought to raise; healthy eating, physical activity and smoking cessation have been receiving much attention of late at a national level.

In-depth reviews and outcomes

The Overview and Scrutiny Board can commission reviews into services provided by the Council or its partners. The aim of such work is to look at how the service may be improved, taking into account the views of those people who are affected by it. The following pages provide a brief summary of the reviews that have been carried out over the last year, explaining why the reviews were set up, how they were carried out, and what the recommendations were.

More information, and copies of all of these in-depth reviews are available on the Council's website, or by contacting the Overview and Scrutiny Team.



Review into the educational service offered to children with special educational needs (SEN).

Why?

Members' casework frequently raised issues regarding the provision of services for children with Special Educational Needs (SENs) and in reviewing the Learning Trust Annual Plan 2002/2003 and the Annual Plan 2003/2004, the Commission recognised that the educational attainment of children with special education needs to be looked at in more detail with a view to raising attainment through curriculum access.

How?

The Commission appointed a sub-committee of Members who led the enquiry and visited a number of school and other institutions in the Borough to see for themselves how SEN provision was being delivered. They also arranged for people with first-hand knowledge of SEN provision in Hackney to appear before the whole Commission. The Commission heard evidence from head teachers, deputy Head Teachers, Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (sencos), teachers, parents, the Learning Trust, the Primary Care Trust and the voluntary sector.

Findings

The Commission found that identification of SEN was of concern as health and education agencies did not provide for a systematic approach to making contact with some children before they start school. It was found that there was among some parents a lack of understanding of SEN and the support available, and at times a resistance or reluctance to accept that a child had SENs.

It was also found that schools did not always consider early enough that a child showing behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESDs) might need to be assessed for SENs. It was noted that some parents or carers send their child with BESDs as well as SENs to mainstream schools against professional advice resulting in exclusion.

The Commission found that some parents and carers valued the power statementing gave them over secondary transfers although they were never intended to be used in this way. The Learning Trust and some schools regarded the statementing process as cumbersome, and in many cases unhelpful. The Commission welcomed the introduction of a Secondary Transfer Panel where the Learning Trust together with representatives of all secondary schools determines secondary school transfers.

The Commission welcomed the planned improvements to the nursing service and CAMHS, including the establishment of a Schools Mental Health Service. It also noted the good co-operation between schools and the police and the youth



offending team, and of the success of the recently integrated speech and language therapy service.

The Commission when considering independent schools heard that most children from Orthodox Jewish families in Hackney go to independent schools where SEN provision was not being funded out of public funds except for the stated part of education provision.

The Commission also noted that it is not only the children with SENs who are affected by the social impact of SEN but their siblings too and that there were concerns that provision for the educational needs of young people with SENs after the end of compulsory education at age 16 is not adequate and that significant numbers of these young people who continue to need education do not get it.

Recommendations

Broadly, the Commission's recommendations fall into three categories. First, the Commission felt that the agencies involved need to work even harder to overcome barriers to the early recognition that a child has SENs so that timely support could be offered. Second, it felt that more communication was needed between the Learning Trust and parents/carers to reassure the latter that changes to assessment procedures and delivery mechanisms would not result in a poorer service to children with SENs. Thirdly, it wanted all agencies to work together to ensure that adequate attention and funding is given to the needs of children with SENs who are also vulnerable in other ways or who use non-school, voluntary or independent sector provision.

Review of local implementation of the Government's Academies programme.

Why?

In the light of the significance of the Academy Programme to Hackney, the speed with which it is being implemented here and demonstrable local public interest shown in the programme, the Commission sought and received approval to conduct a full review.

How?

Evidence was taken from Mossbourne Community Academy, the Petchey Academy and the Bridge Academy. The Chief Executive of The Learning Trust, parents, Trade Unions and the public.

The Commission looked in particular at:

- The Learning Trust policy with regard to Academies
- Consideration of admission criteria and their implications
- The nature and effect of sponsorship of Hackney's Academies
- Governance Issues
- The role of Academies in providing for children with SENs

Findings

The Commission heard that a key

element of the Council's and the Learning Trust's strategy for secondary provision is to increase the number of secondary places available to Hackney through a programme of up to five academies. The Academies have a funding agreement with the Learning Trust which is in line with the local funding arrangements for specialist schools. All Academies have to sign up to an Expression of Interest which sets out a vision and ethos, approach to admissions and collaborative working and specialisms.

The Commission heard that admission criteria for Academies will be consistent with the arrangements for maintained secondary schools in Hackney. The Learning Trust was consulted on and agreed the admission arrangements for Mossbourne, Petchey and Bridge Academies. All Academies are mixed and non-denominational and give priority to children in public care and with special education need statements. Pupils with special needs but without statements are admitted in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Academies operate fair banding and are included in the coordinated admission arrangements across London.

The Commission heard that Academy Governing Bodies include a local authority representative (The Learning Trust) but have no other statutory or contractual requirement in regard to parental, community or business representatives being placed into their governing bodies.

Recommendations

At the time of preparing this report, the Commission had not finalised its report on the local implementation of the Academies programme. However, it was felt likely that the Commission would recognise the reasons for the large-scale use of the programme in Hackney and endorse the general approach being adopted here. However, it was also likely that the Commission would make recommendations in connection with the interaction between the admission procedures of the academies and those of most other secondary schools in the Borough.



Public Realm Improvement and Regeneration.

Why?

Improving the public realm is one of the Mayor's key priorities and came high on the list of residents' concerns identified in a recent MORI poll. Furthermore, mounting evidence from elsewhere in the UK indicated that an attractive and accessible public realm can be good for business; and new government initiatives such as Business Improvement Districts provide an innovative means of realising such improvements. A scrutiny review was therefore proposed to investigate the issues facing Hackney's retail centres and how the Council might learn from good practice developed in other towns and cities to address these issues.

How?

Four evidence gathering sessions were held with town centre managers, consultants, urban designers and transport planners involved in the delivery of public realm improvements elsewhere in London, LBH officers and representatives of the local business community. In addition, Members took part in a debate with urban design

practitioners, visited Kensington High Street to view public realm improvement schemes and surveyed local businesses.

Findings

The Commission found that the borough's retail centres are underused for a variety of reasons, linked particularly to environmental problems, concern about crime and lack of range of goods. Hackney retailers specifically pointed to dirty streets, graffiti, lack of proper town centre management, perception of crime and a lack of parking and public transport. Town centres across the UK suffer from similar problems exacerbated by the popularity of out-of-town shopping centres.

The Commission heard that other towns, cities and London boroughs have attracted visitors and boosted business through creating a more attractive environment and introducing pedestrian-friendly measures. It has been demonstrated that well-planned improvements to public spaces can boost commercial trading by up to 40% and generate significant public sector



investment. Funding for these initiatives has been made possible through partnerships between local authorities and the business community. A holistic approach is vital and town centre management schemes can ensure a co-ordinated long-term strategy.

Recommendations

The Commission made a number of recommendations focusing on the measures necessary to regenerate the borough's retail centres and means of funding and delivering these measures. Members recommended that the Council creates a better balance between motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in Hackney's retail streets, adopts policies that place much greater emphasis on designing attractive, accessible streets and gives equal consideration to urban design issues in designing streets in the borough.

The Commission recommended that the Council adopts a more holistic way of

working between the various department and agencies involved in the public realm, that they support greater engagement with local businesses and maximise additional avenues of funding for the public realm provided by planning gain, European Union programmes and so forth.

A Business Improvement District was not specifically recommended as being appropriate at this time but could be further investigated once the Council has built up a more successful dialogue with the business community.

Owing to issues identified by participants in the review as pressing concerns, the Commission also recommended that the Council and Transport for London give priority to commercial users in terms of allocation of the available parking in commercial centres and that the Council makes sensitive but effective use of enforcement powers with regards to commercial waste.

Review of Market Provision.

Why?

The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission chose to undertake a review into Market Provision across the borough commencing in June 2005 after some earlier exploratory discussions. Previously the Council's financial difficulties have meant that the markets have not received the support and attention needed to prosper and a number have shown significant decline over recent years. The Members of the Commission were aware that the situation was

previously poor both in terms of the operational situation at the markets and also regarding relations between traders, trade associations and the Council.

In March 2005 the Environment Directorate began a comprehensive analysis of the borough's markets. A two part approach was taken; part one to analyse, in consultation with traders the market's strengths and weakness' in order to provide strong foundations for part two - the development of a formal Markets Strategy. The long term aims

being transparent and fair regulation, investment and regeneration leading to a sustainable future for the borough's markets.

The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission aimed to conduct its review concurrently with the development of the Markets Strategy in order to provide an additional forum for discussion, to investigate the areas of concern and to ultimately assist in the formulation of policy that would shape the future of Market Provision in Hackney.

How?

The Commission carried out the Scrutiny Review by holding a series of evidence gathering sessions. The topics that were chosen were selected following consultation with traders and Council Officers. They were focussed on issues that had been raised in preliminary discussion as those that caused concern, were particularly complex or felt to be in need of review and discussion. The areas examined over the course of the review were:

- **Parking** – incorrect signage; controlled parking zones; Traffic Management Orders and parking regulations, including loading and unloading restrictions.

- **Crime and Enforcement** – generic issues across all markets i.e. petty crime, anti social behaviour and sales of stolen goods; street violence; partnership working with the local Police force and Community Safety Teams and issues specific to Kingsland Waste.

- **Health and Safety** – power supplies and abuses; access for emergency vehicles and disabled shoppers; generic health and safety standards; waste collection and emergency situation response plans.

- **Finance and Fees** - budgets and forecasted outturns for the following financial year; Licences, fees and fee structures.

- Fresh Produce, Organic and Farmers Markets and additional provision of fresh foods across the Borough.

In addition to the discussion sessions, Councillors also carried out a series of site visits to Broadway, Hoxton, Ridley Road, Well Street and Kingsland Waste markets which were instrumental in identifying many of the problems faced and allowed Members of the Commission to speak to traders, shoppers and residents about the issues and areas of concern and see the impact that these had first hand.



Findings

The findings of the Commission included reviews of the Controlled Parking Zones around the markets, much of the signage and restriction were confused and in places incorrect. Traders felt very strongly that this inconvenienced shoppers and hindered trade, they were particularly keen to be involved in consultation exercises relating to the CPZ's and work with local residents and Council Officers to secure the best outcome possible.

Health and Safety matters are of vital importance to both traders and shoppers. The scrutiny Commission found that there was insufficient regulation or codes of practice in place. Improvements needed to be made to the infrastructure and trading practices would also need to change to make the markets safer for the public and traders alike. The Commission were therefore particularly pleased to note that a full review of all Health and Safety matters was planned for all of the markets featured in the consultation.

Following the site visits to the markets the Commission found that there were many areas of underused and derelict land in and around the markets. Traders were keen to utilise these area and there was potential for redevelopment. There were few designated areas for traders to dispose of and store waste. In addition to Health and Safety problems including rats and poor drainage, recycling facilities were poor and collection times erratic and poorly communicated. There was a lack of public conveniences or where in place these were misused.

Due to the nature and length of the review it quickly became apparent that

there was an opportunity for some of the less complex operational issues to be tackled and possibly resolved before the review was concluded. These included an assessment of street furniture at Hoxton Market, which resolved issues relating to anti-social behaviour, removal of temporary toilets at Ridley Road Market which were attracting prostitution and illegal activities, the adoption of regular Trader Association and Council Officer meetings and a commitment to improved communications by all parties.

Recommendations

The Commission made a total of twenty recommendations. These included the recommendation that the Health and Safety assessment findings were taken into account and incorporated into the Market Strategy, in particular the creation of Emergency Response Plans for all markets and a full formal fire assessment for each individual market. The Commission wished to encourage the support of recycling at all of the markets and recommended further assessment of recycling facilities and provision of additional areas for traders to store waste and recycle.

On the complex issue of Parking the Commission wished to see clarity and transparency of Council policy on loading and unloading restrictions, Traffic Management Orders, CPZ consultations and recommended that annual Christmas Parking exemptions for shoppers at the markets be considered by the Parking Team.

Members wished to highlight the lack of market provision in the North of the Borough and recommended that long term initiatives that are focussed on

overall regeneration promotion and long term sustainability take into account the possible development of areas such as Woodberry Down.

The Commission strongly recommended that derelict and underused land as identified on the site visits in and around the three main markets is investigated with a view to clearing and utilising according to the needs of the market, for

example additional storage. Additionally the Commission were also keen for the potential re-development of such areas to be researched in order to assess the potential to provide additional funding, encouraging the growth in the areas surrounding the markets.

The Commission intends to review the Street Market Strategy six months after it is formally approved by Cabinet.

Sexual Health Services

Why?

The City and Hackney Primary Care Trust's Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme (HIMP) 2005-8 identifies the promotion of sexual health as one of its priority areas for action.

Work being undertaken locally is concerned with the provision of advice to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In the HIMP the desired outcomes of such initiatives are a reduction in teenage and unwanted pregnancies, lowering levels of sexually transmitted diseases and reducing the death rate from HIV.

It is known that sexually transmitted infections are on the increase. The prevalence of all major STI's has increased over the past three years, markedly so in London as a whole from 1996 – 2002. (City and Hackney Public Health Profile 2004.)

In addition the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission has the responsibility for monitoring Key

Deliverable (KD) 24 – a priority area for action by the Council. One strand of the KD relates to teenage pregnancies and improving the governance and service arrangements available in this area.

How?

The Commission's investigation into Sexual Health Services was planned to include a number of evidence gathering sessions where we heard from the City & Hackney Teaching Primary Care Trust, the Homerton University Hospital, the Learning Trust, the University of Greenwich, the Health Protection Agency as well as Positive East and Hackney Free and Parochial Sports College. The



Commission also reflected upon a number of other approaches that can be adopted relating to sexual health services including a programme called Speakeasy (which works to encourage discussions between parents and their children) and also about the Borough's successful Teenage Pregnancy (reduction) Strategy.

A number of site visits were also undertaken where members of the Commission visited the Department of Sexual Health based at the Homerton Hospital and also the IVY centre at St Leonard's.

In receiving evidence from such a wide variety of sources the Commission has gained great insight into not only how sexual health issues are dealt with but also how such services are and can be delivered in a community setting.

Findings

The Commission found that the increase in sexually transmitted infections that has been observed across the country is mirrored in Hackney. Inevitably such issues and the subsequent volume of patients seeking and/or requiring sexual health services created capacity challenges for local service providers.

The Commission found that the local Department of Sexual Health (Homerton Hospital) faced a number of challenges in seeking to ensure that no individual attending was turned away. The number of patients attending is twice that for whom the service was designed. The need for increased and/or reviewed capacity has now been acknowledged. The Commission welcomed the fact that fresh capacity was being created locally by the development of new primary care initiatives.

Above all the evidence received by the Commission identified the need for society to modify its behaviour so as to reduce the risks faced. The twin tracks for prevention are behavioural change and rapid access to excellent services.

Much good work was found to be taking place in schools and other youth settings (such work now needs to be extended to the LBH Youth Service) where the Commission found that it is imperative that preventive messages are delivered, in a comfortable setting, at an appropriate and timely age. Young people need to be empowered to make their own decisions.

Recommendations

The Commission made a number of recommendations. These drew attention to the need for greater local capacity so that access to services could be provided in a timely fashion to those in need. The role of the community setting was acknowledged and a recommendation was made for the extension work in general practice so as to support an extended screening programme.

The Commission believed that improved information provision was key and that such information should be provided in ways that make it accessible to Hackney's diverse population.

Following the theme of prevention and dispersal of information the Commission also found that scope existed to enhance the work being undertaken within the education and youth setting. The Commission sought to recommend that education initiatives were taught in settings that were both comfortable and relevant to young people in the borough.

Particularly well-received peer group initiatives such as those run by 'Clued Up' were noted and their further promotion sought. The Commission

believes that such work should be extended to the renewed LBH Youth Service.

Alcohol – assessing the impact, reducing the harm

Why?

This scrutiny review took place against the background of the diverse problems caused by or associated with alcohol consumption. For example in January 2005 the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation considered a report on the public health problems caused by alcohol and made extensive recommendations to the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly. Their first request to member states reads: 'to develop.....programmes for reducing the negative health and social consequences of harmful use of alcohol'.

It is acknowledged that alcohol consumption has a negative effect on many aspects of health and is associated with injury, violence, disability, social problems, premature deaths, mental ill health and contributes to social and health inequalities.

The City and Hackney Public Health Profile 2004 (The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health Part 2) states that 'The residents of Hackney face many forms of deprivation. Hackney's wards are all within the top 10% of the most deprived wards in the country. The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines measures of income, unemployment, poor health, disability, education and housing a geographical access to services'.

Adding weight to the Commission's desire to look at this area was the backdrop that the Licensing Act 2003 places responsibility for licensing alcohol outlets with local licensing authorities. Such a policy shift intends to bring the decision making process closer to the communities it affects and thus increase democratic accountability.

How?

This Scrutiny Commission sought to focus its review principally on the public health aspects of alcohol and the impact of the licensing regime change. In conducting this review the Commission received a large amount of written evidence in addition to verbal presentations from the following local



partners: City and Hackney Primary Care Trust, Homerton University Hospital, City and Hackney Alcohol Service, The Licensed Trade, an LBH licensing perspective, LBH Social Services, The Learning Trust, LBH Drug Action Team and Sub 19, LBH Health and Safety, The East London and City Mental Health Service, in addition to evidence from service users.

The review ran concurrently with a research project commissioned by the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission (funds were made available by London Borough of Hackney) which has been designed to get to grips with the data needed to make a realistic and timely assessment of the impact of the licensing regime in LBH and the subsequent review of the local Licensing Policy.

Findings

In considering the evidence brought before it the Scrutiny Commission became conscious of the effects of alcohol at the Homerton University Hospital. A&E sees a number of regular patients who require beds and staff attention. The number of individuals on some hospital wards, present because of alcoholism, was also startling. When considering the clear affects that alcohol use has on such health settings it was surprising to find that little data is collected.

As with all public health matters much scope exists for the development and enhancement of community based health services and the Commission felt that much could be achieved through improved partnership working to deliver effective preventive messages and ensure that all those suffering from

alcohol use are afforded the help they need and do not get stuck between statutory agency services or lapse whilst waiting for an appointment.

Such forms of inter agency working were exhibited in the evidence that the Commission received from Hackney DAT which has sought to establish a local Drug and Alcohol substance misuse strategy in the face of Treasury rules which prevent its direct provision of services relating solely to alcohol. Accordingly the Commission has recommended that opportunities for addressing the perceived funding imbalance through the use of Local Area Agreements, raising the possibility that funds may be distributed according to need through the Drug Action Team.

As with many of its investigations the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission found that the work of the voluntary sector was invaluable in delivery services to our local population, much good will and support exists for services such as those provided by City and Hackney Alcohol Services if only their status could be mainstreamed.

Recommendations

The Scrutiny Commission has made a number of recommendations in respect of alcohol. Several are concerned with the collation of data in order to demonstrate clearly the effects of alcohol and allow statutory agencies to take action as may be appropriate to curtail the pressures placed upon their local partners.

The Commission concluded that the ability to provide preventive care and assistance within the community could

be effected through the development of services which place greater emphasis on the need to tackle alcohol use and in ensuring that onward referral to where ever this may be is managed and patients, often suffering from addiction, are not left unattended.

The role of Trading Standards clearly remains critical in ensuring that the decisions now taken at a local level in respect of licensing are upheld and that

young people are not exposed to the harm that alcohol can cause.

A number of recommendations have also been targeted at the Council and its statutory partners where the Commission believes scope exists for developing the occupational health function so as to support those employees who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Governance Arrangements and Financial Implications of the ALMO

The Governance and Resources Commission meeting in November was dedicated to the newly established Arms Length Management Organisation for Housing, in particular its governance arrangements and the financial impact upon the Council. After questioning senior officers on the ALMO Project Team, the Commission Members concluded that they were satisfied with the governance arrangements in place, and commented that the arrangements go beyond the standards expected in

company law, and should be commended.

On the financial impact side, Members raised questions about compatibility between financial recording systems; methods of controlling costs; the relationship of Tenancy Management Organisations to the ALMO and funding for the Tenants' Convention.



Elections Process

The responsibility for the running of elections and the electoral registration process rests with the Chief Executive, who takes personal responsibility for all electoral matters. In response to a number of issues both at a national and local level which became apparent during the May General Election, the Commission requested a review into:

- how the Council ensures a secure

postal voting system

- the registration process
- the actions the council are taking to review the location of polling stations in the borough.

The Chair of the Commission invited responses from all persons directly involved in the process. This tied in with

the Chief Executive's own review into the election process, and was therefore welcomed by the Chief Executive. The Elections Manager then presented a report to the Commission at its October meeting. The Commission was informed that: new delivery systems for poll cards and postal votes will dramatically improve

current arrangements; new approaches to registration are being tried in attempt to improve response rates; and a separate review of polling stations is currently being undertaken.

The Commission was satisfied with the work being undertaken.

Holding Cabinet to Account

The other main part of the Scrutiny role is to hold the Cabinet to account for the decisions that they take. This is achieved either by considering reports prior to them being agreed by Council, or requesting reports from Cabinet Members on how recent decisions have been implemented or improved services.

The following section summarises some of the work that has been done over the year in this regard.

- **Performance monitoring: Quarterly Performance Statistics. (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has had the opportunity to review progress on Key Deliverables and Best Value Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis. Cabinet Members and Chief Officers have been invited to these sessions to answer questions Members have had, and give assurances that actions are in place to address areas of under-performance.

- **Arrangement for Tracking Missing Children. (Overview and Scrutiny Board).**

Following a motion agreed by full Council in June 2005, the Overview and Scrutiny

Board looked at the arrangements that are in currently place for when a child is reported missing. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Social Services, the Police and the Learning Trust who presented reports to the Board on this sensitive issue. This was followed up with a local press release clarifying the Councils findings.

- **Admissions Criteria. (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board assessed Admissions Criteria in the borough following a request from full Council in October 2005 that they investigate issues that have arisen in transfers to Secondary Schools and admissions to primary schools as a result of the central admissions policy. Council also requested that they make recommendations following the discussion and as a result the Board recommended that Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Commission further investigate the issue as part of their review of the Learning Trust Annual Plan and report their findings back to the Board.

- **ALMO, Hackney Homes, and the Delivery Plan. (Governance and Resources and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commissions)**

The ALMO Team attended the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting in July 05 when Members were given a general brief. In September there was a combined meeting of the Living in Hackney and Governance and Resources Commissions and the Standards Committee which looked at the ALMO plans in further detail.

Continuous monitoring saw the ALMO team return to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission in January 2006 to present the draft Delivery Plan for assessment prior to its formal sign off from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Government Statutory approval is required before it is able to 'go live' on the 1st April. Scrutiny will have a future role in monitoring its development, primarily in the assessment of its Delivery Plan, which will be presented to Scrutiny annually.

- **Olympic Bid. (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board considered the current position of the Council's plans for the Olympics following the announcement of the successful London bid. Members wished to particularly discuss what outcomes are being sought for Hackney and what key decisions will be made over the next two years and their implications for the Council and the community.

- **Ad-hoc review of the Children's Strategy (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board requested a panel consider the council's response to the emerging children agenda. Following a number of meetings and site visits this Panel determined that they were satisfied with the level of community consultation being undertaken within this area and referred the on-going review of this area to the Children and Young Person's Scrutiny Commission.

- **Flu Pandemic Planning. (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

The Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission arranged and hosted a North East London Health Scrutiny briefing on contingency plans for a potential Flu Pandemic. This meeting took place in Hackney in November 2005. Councillors, Public Health professionals and Social Services representatives were invited from Hackney and its six/seven sector neighbours. Thanks were received from a wide number of those that attended.

Local arrangements specific to LBH were further assessed when a paper was submitted to the Commission in February 2006.

- **Older Persons Mental Health Best Value Review. (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

Completing its involvement in this best value review the Commission received an update from Social Services at its September 2005 meeting that detailed the progress being made in taking forward the recommendation made in the concluding report of this review. The

Commission satisfied itself that the conclusions of the review were being progressed and taken forward.

- **Learning Trust Annual Plan. (Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission)**

Reviewed by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Commission over two sessions held in January 2006. The Commission focussed on Key Performance Indicator targets, The Implementation of education and education-related initiatives (including the Children, Young People and Families Strategy) and how increased stakeholder involvement will be achieved. The Annual Plan was approved subject to a number of minor conditions.

- **Children & Young People's Plan. (Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission)**

The CYPP was reviewed by the Commission in December and February. The Commission warmly welcomed the Plan and recommended its approval to Council.

- **Annual Audit Letter. (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

The Commission questioned the District Auditor, the Chief Executive and other Council Officers on issues raised in the Audit letter 2003/04 and the Council's response. The Commission was advised that there has been a general strengthening of Council control procedures and that the plans contained within the response are good. The emphasis now needs to be on the actual implementation of improvements and the embedding of procedures across the council.

In future years the Annual Audit Letter will be reviewed by the Audit Sub-Committee.

- **The Budget. (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

At its February meeting the Commission was presented with the Final Budget Settlement. It also reviewed final proposals for Directorates' growth for 2006/07, as well as efficiency savings for 2006/07. The Chair of the Commission congratulated the Finance team for all their hard work to improve the management of the budget process over the past few years.

- **Hackney Performance Plan. (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board reviewed the Hackney Performance Plan prior to Council agreement, questioning the Chief Executive and Chief Officers on target setting process and performance over the last year.

- **Internal Audit Plan. (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

Reviewed by Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission with the Director of Finance, Head of Service and Audit Commission. Ensured liaison between Internal Audit and directorates, and relationship with the Audit Commission.

- **Equalities Updates. (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board receive updates on a quarterly basis on progress in achieving the Local Government Equalities Standard. Senior

Officers attend these sessions to discuss in detail any queries or concerns that Members may have.

- **Corporate Equalities Plan.**
(Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)

In addition to quarterly updates on Equalities issues across the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Board received a presentation from the Human Resources Team updating them on specific areas of the Corporate Equalities Plan. The discussions focus around three main areas of the Equalities Agenda for Hackney: Disability; Faith and Race and Older People.

- **Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Options Review.**
(Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

The Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission scrutinised the consultation process undertaken to inform the Options Review for the future management and administration of the Council's VCS grants programme prior to a decision being taken by the Cabinet. Members met with representatives of the voluntary and community sector to discuss their involvement in the consultation process. Members were satisfied that the views of the sector had been taken into account during the process. In addition, the Commission recommended that the Council support greater capacity building for voluntary organisations.

- **Strategic Pricing Review.**
(Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

The Council recently reviewed its policy on fees and charges for use of leisure facilities with the aim of streamlining the policy to ensure it is equitable and to encourage use of the Hackney Leisure Card. The Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission looked at the resulting proposals in terms of their impact on the socially excluded. The Commission supported the proposals and was particularly encouraged by the 10-25% discount to be awarded to clubs providing opportunities for young people.

- **Sport and Physical Activity Strategy/Parks Three Year Plan.**
(Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

The Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission monitored progress that had been made with these strategies one year after implementation. Members encouraged officers to address identified issues with facilities and the fact that many borough residents are unaware that services exist. The Commission was pleased with progress made to encourage the socially excluded to take exercise, through establishing community champions, training park rangers to conduct healthy walks and seeking to broaden the GP referral scheme to offer gardening and volunteer park-rangering to the elderly.

Feedback

We realise how important it is to evaluate what we do to make sure that our work is viewed as worthwhile. We believe that successful Overview and Scrutiny is about adding value, enabling improvement through effective challenge, analysis, policy review and development.

We believe we are achieving this aim.

This is demonstrated in the sections above, we are also tracking how the recommendations from our reviews are being implemented so that we can demonstrate how Overview and Scrutiny has changed the way the Council delivers services and carried out its business.

Potential Areas for Review 2006/07

With a full Council Election due in the London Borough of Hackney in May there are obvious implications for a Scrutiny Forward Plan for the next Municipal year. Membership of the Commissions will be agreed following the Council's AGM and formal discussions of areas for in-depth review will then commence alongside approaches for holding the Executive to account.

A Forward Plan will then be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board when the new cohort of Overview and Scrutiny Members has been selected in May 2006. Our experiences have shown us that each Scrutiny Commission can realistically expect to complete at most two in-depth reviews per municipal year.

Potential areas for review that will be topical in the coming year, or that have been identified by the various directorates, partners and Members as indicative areas that would benefit from Scrutiny are detailed below. Additional sources for potential review can be seen to include the Council's Forward and Corporate Plans, outcomes from the JAR and CPA inspections, additional identified priority areas, the results of MORI surveys, and the experiences and views of the new Members themselves.

In addition to this indicative list both individual items that arise and in-depth reviews that are identified in advance the Overview and Scrutiny Board will every month look at the Council's Cabinet Forward Plan and Consultation forward plan to look at other potential items for inclusion.

Furthermore we want to further develop Overview and Scrutiny so that we can continue to build on its successes to date. Options for improvement based on the experience of existing Overview and Scrutiny Members will be considered with the new Members in May.

There are currently five standing Scrutiny Commissions who will be responsible for carrying out the reviews, with the Overview and Scrutiny Board responsible for co-ordinating and managing their work.

There are two ways we will do this.

i. Review Performance Information

The Overview and Scrutiny Board will review quarterly performance against the Council's Key Performance Indicators, inviting Cabinet Members to attend these sessions.

ii. Reviewing reports and strategies prior to Cabinet agreement.

Scrutiny Commissions may wish to review key decisions being made by Cabinet, or review the implementation of existing policies on a one-off basis. These will be identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and assigned to the appropriate scrutiny commission. A number of such items have already been identified and will be scheduled into the Commission forward plans following the elections in May.

Potential areas for in-depth reviews – Contributing to Policy Development

A number of possible theme based areas for review have been identified and are detailed below. It is important to that areas identified and chosen for review add value and support other related activities.

Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Following enquiries being place with all appropriate local partners and consideration of the local Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme the following indicative areas have been identified as possible areas for future investigations for health scrutiny;

- Issues relating to the well-being of mental health patients
- Priority areas for action as identified within the City and Hackney's Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme
- Local health partnership arrangements including statutory and non statutory working arrangements

- The local health and social care workforce

Living In Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Discussions have taken place with the relevant directorates and enquires made to the Directors for potential areas of work for the next municipal year. As a result the following areas have been identified:

- Housing related strategies and plans
- The impact of the ALMO and the Decent Homes Initiative on the housing provision of the borough's population
- Issues relating to the needs of the Borough's Traveller community
- The work of Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Waste

Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Commission

- Extended Schools and their impact on the Children's agenda
- School Exclusions, pupil attendance and the wider youth offering
- Underachievement and attainment

Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission

- Sustainable energy
- A refreshed Team Hackney and NRF

Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission

- Corporate Procurement
- Governance arrangements for the ALMO
- Regeneration programmes

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Haddii aad jeceshahay in aad ogaato waxa warqadan laguugu sheegaayo, Fadlan waxa aad calaamadisaa Sanduuqan oo waxa aad Magacaaga, Adirayskaaga iyo Telifoon Lambarkaaga aad ku qortaa xagga hoose ee boggan, oo ku soo celi markaa Adirayskan xagga hoose ku qoran. (Somali)

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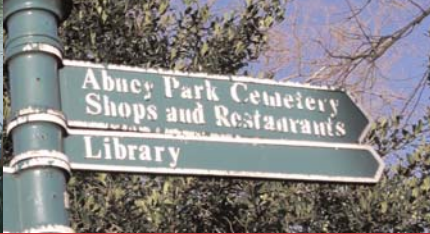
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CONTACTS

If you would like to receive more information, or would like to be involved in any of the reviews included in this report, please contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team.

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Further information about the scrutiny process can also be found in the Council's Corporate Governance Manual at www.hackney.gov.uk



 **Hackney**

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