



Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report & Forward Plan

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Introduction from Scrutiny Chairs

Overview and Scrutiny, like the rest of the Council, has achieved many successes and faced a variety of challenges during the 2006-07 municipal year. The Audit Commission judged that the Council is 'improving well'; Overview and Scrutiny has aimed to encourage and shape further improvement by assisting the Council and its partners through delivery of a thorough and effective scrutiny programme and fulfilling its 'critical friend' role to Cabinet and Council. The scrutiny function has benefited from the fresh ideas of new Members elected in May, adding to and complementing the experience of longer-standing Members.

During the year the Commissions have carried out a number of in-depth reviews, chosen because they represent issues that are important to local people, because a review would add value, or themed to develop new policies or services. The issues reviewed have ranged from investigating how to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment and training, the Council's ICT systems, through to standards of housing management employed by Registered Social Landlords.

In addition we have sought to hold the Cabinet to account through continuing with our role of challenging quarterly performance monitoring, looking at how the Council directorates are each addressing social inclusion and taking up issues on behalf of local people such as repairs to Kings Crescent Estate.

As well as seeking to influence improvements elsewhere in the Council and Team Hackney partnership organisations, we have sought to evaluate and improve our scrutiny function through benchmarking it against the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Principles of Good Scrutiny.

The findings of this internal review support the direction of travel we set out through a series of measures implemented following the 2006 Local Government Elections. These have

sought to accelerate the pace of change through delivery of revised processes that ensure effective support to Members and appropriate levels of engagement with Council directorates, the executive and our Team Hackney partners. Overall we are pleased to conclude that Overview and Scrutiny was generally given a clean bill of health while several areas for further work were identified.

We have also renewed our efforts to engage the community more in our work, through obtaining greater publicity in Hackney Today, surveying local people about scrutiny priorities and co-opting members of the public to sit on the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission. We have also tried to take Overview and Scrutiny out of the Town Hall where appropriate by, for example, visiting GP surgeries, local schools, and also other boroughs to learn about their procurement processes and partnership structures to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

More streamlined scrutiny processes introduced this year have resulted in the development of closer working practices with Cabinet members and senior officers. We express our thanks to them for their contributions, and to the many other officers, councillors and community members who have supported and provided evidence to the various commissions.

Overview and Scrutiny has moved forward in the last year, and the challenge will be to continue this improvement next year. We will be focusing on Member training and development, broadening the knowledge and understanding of scrutiny throughout Hackney and its partner organisations, fostering a greater challenge element through our performance monitoring exercises, and exploring innovative ways of conducting scrutiny to encourage greater participation from all sections of the community, in addition to responding to the challenges contained within the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

2 Update on Recommendations and Implementation from Last Year

We aim to ensure that the recommendations we make are acted upon, and therefore regularly request progress updates following the conclusion of our reviews. Examples of how our scrutiny reviews from previous years have had an impact on the work of the Council and its partners are shown below.

A. Special Educational Needs (Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission)

An initial response to the recommendations was received at the July 2006 Commission meeting and followed up by a further meeting between a representative of the Commission, and the Head of the Special Education Needs Division at the Learning Trust. Details of this meeting were reported to Members in September 2006, as were comments from the Mayor.



A co-opted member has committed to following up recommendations 4.1.12 and 4.1.13 with the Union of Orthodox Jews and will report outcomes to Members in due course.

The Commission will continue to monitor the implementation of recommendations arising from the review during the 2007/08 municipal year.

B. Implementation of the Government's Academies Programme in Hackney (Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission)

The initial response to the review findings and recommendations was presented to the Commission in July 2006. Members noted that Academies across the country had experienced difficulties and that it was to the credit of all concerned that such problems had been avoided locally.

It is anticipated that the Commission will continue to monitor progress in this area in the coming municipal year.

C. Members Inquiry – Commercial Property (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)

Members considered the work undertaken by a cross-party working group prior to the Local Government Elections of May 2006 which reviewed

2 Update on Recommendations and Implementation from Last Year

processes applicable to and the background of commercial property disposals within the borough. Ten recommendations were made and the newly elected Members of the authority were keen to observe progress made toward implementation. Members considered an updated action plan at their meeting in December and expressed some dissatisfaction at the rate of progress in implementing recommendations requesting a further update by March 2007.

In March 2007 Members were satisfied that progress had been made in this, at times, high profile policy area and were particularly re-assured that matters were being taken forward having reviewed a report from December Cabinet relating to regeneration options for Dalston Lane Terraces. End of year out-turns for commercial rent collection will be considered in due course and the

Commission is likely to consider an update on the Dalston Terraces situation in autumn of 2007.

D. Recruitment and Retention of Council Staff (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)

The Commission received an update on activities being undertaken in relation to past scrutiny work in this area.

Members considered that much work had been undertaken in particular in seeking to reduce the number of agency staff employed by the Council though more is to be done and is already planned in relation to recruitment and retention initiatives across the authority.

Following this update the Commission requested that work be undertaken to explore ways of helpfully capturing employee data so as to more accurately reflect Hackney's diverse make up and to communicate the merits of such work to the Audit Commission.

Members have identified human resources and workforce related matters as an area they may wish to review in 2007/08.

E. Alcohol Review (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)

It is anticipated that the Commission will receive a full update on the progress of its recommendations in



the next municipal year.

The initial response to the recommendations identified that implementation of the some require additional resources and partners have agreed to undertake research to prepare requests for resources in 2007/08 budget setting process.

The Commission retain particular interest in the identified gaps in the knowledge for alcohol related harm in Hackney, accordingly it is hoped implementation of the recommendations will go some way to assisting in reducing the effects of alcohol related harm in the community.

F. Sexual Health Services Review (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)

Previous updates received in relation to this review were provided by officers in January 2006 and November 2006 which were considered at the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission meeting in January 2007.

The Commission felt the recommendations were being progressed satisfactorily given the current climate for resources availability within the NHS. Updates advised the PCT and the Homerton are working together to achieve the target maximum wait time of 48 hours for services. Services and access are set to improve

through the introduction of improved testing methods; improved community links are being fostered with hospital base services and updated IT systems. The Learning Trust has worked towards improving Sexual Relationship Education (SRE) training within schools and the number of staff within schools with SRE qualification and training. The Commission believes its role in monitoring the implementation of its recommendations in this area has been completed.

G. Coronary Heart Disease Review (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)

Previous updates received in relation to this review were provided by officers in January 2006 and November 2006 which were considered at the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission meeting



2 Update on Recommendations and Implementation from Last Year

in January 2007. Broadly the recommendations from this review covered implementation of the smoking cessation policy, improving services to assist people to quit smoking, to encourage healthier eating and maintaining a good, healthy balanced diet in schools.

Following the review all vending machines in schools were removed by the Learning Trust and within the Council buildings except one. The Commission is encouraged to see health partners reviewing their vending machines policy and where possible introducing healthier options in the vending machines or removing them completely.

The Council has introduced mechanisms to encourage and support staff to use healthy and greener forms of transportations to work to help create a healthier workforce.



The Commission was pleased to see all organisations taking responsibility and contributing to the success of driving forward the smoking cessation policy. The Commission believes its role in monitoring the implementation of its recommendations in this area has been completed.

H. Review of Market Provision across the Borough (Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)

Following the conclusion of the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Review of Market Provision in the Borough and the corresponding recommendations, the Commission received feedback from the Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Directorate at its meeting in July 2006.

In response to the recommendations the Markets Team provided a detailed Markets Strategy Action Plan detailing actions and timeframes for responding to each recommendation in turn.

Measures to be undertaken to meet the requirements as set out by the Commission include a full assessment of recycling facilities at all markets, the creation of a Starter Pack for new traders, consultation work with traders and residents aimed at utilising derelict and underused land at the three main markets and the consideration of future market provision in the north of the borough.

The majority of work detailed in the Markets Strategy Action Plan is taking place in the beginning of 2007 and the Commission is scheduled to receive a progress report in the early part of the 2007/08 municipal year.

I. Public Realm Improvement and Regeneration (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

The Commission received a more detailed response to its recommendations from the Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Directorate in July 2006. Officers outlined the various ways in which they are improving the street environment in Hackney and making the borough more attractive for business investment, primarily through development of a Streetscene Strategy and implementation of the Enforcement Strategy, as well as employing an urban designer and drawing up a policy on pedestrian guard railing. The Council's walking, cycling and parking policies recognise the need to create a better balance between motorised vehicles and other road users in retail streets.

Members considered more could be done in response to their recommendation on parking policy in the borough, and will receive a further response at the start of the 2007/08 municipal year.

J. Voluntary Sector Grants Options Review (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

Members received an update in March 2007 regarding the outcomes of the Options Review for the future administration of the Council's grants programme, and a response to their reference to Cabinet. Members were supportive of proposals to administer funding to the voluntary sector in-house from April 2008 as this would lead to increased support for the sector; and were reassured that the Council can now put in place robust systems to undertake this process. The Commission was pleased to note that communication and support for the move to commissioning are being put in place at an early stage. In response to a further recommendation, it is proposed that the Commission is involved in a future review of the criteria for awarding grants in summer 2007.

K. Training Opportunities for Young People (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

Members were pleased that the work they undertook in this area was taken up by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission in their review of young people not in training, education or employment this year.

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In-depth Reviews and Outcomes

The Overview and Scrutiny Board can commission reviews into policies of the Council or its partners, or delivery of the services they provide. The aim of such work is to look at how the policy or 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 undertaken, how they were carried out, their findings and recommendations.

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

A. Young People in the Borough Not in Education, Employment or Training (Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

This review was prompted by a number of factors, including results from the 2006 Joint Area Review of Children's Services which, although generally positive, highlighted Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as an area for further investigation and improvement. Reducing worklessness for 18-24 year olds in the borough has been identified as a priority outcome to meet the Economic Development targets of the Local Area Agreement, in alignment with the overall Community Strategy.

How?

The Commission appointed a working group of Members to lead the enquiry. This group visited several organisations working with NEET young people in Hackney and also sought the views of young people themselves. Representatives of statutory providers and community and voluntary sector organisations with first-hand knowledge of the current work being done with NEET young people also attended formal Commission meetings to give evidence. In addition, contact was made with a number of other relevant organisations via telephone, letter and email to request additional information.

Findings

Members reviewed a wide ranging number of topics relating to NEETs, including the background national legislation and guidance, the role of the Connexions Service and Youth Services, the impact of developments in secondary education provision in Hackney and nationally, and work and training opportunities available to young people in the borough.

Members heard that challenging targets had been set for the borough in terms of reducing numbers of NEETs and the number of young people for whom destinations were unknown, and as the review concluded they were pleased to hear that the November 2006 monitoring figures demonstrated positive results against these targets.

The needs of Voluntary and Community Sector Services providing assistance and support to NEET young people and their parents/carers were also reviewed.

Recommendations

Broadly, the Commission's recommendations fall into seven categories, as follows:

- Transition arrangements for Youth Services and the Connexions Service in the light of forthcoming national changes to Connexions Partnerships and provision for NEETs.
- The promotion of data sharing and joint working between all agencies involved in working with NEETs, with a view to reducing the number of young people in the borough whose status is currently unknown in terms of education, employment or training opportunities.



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- Planning to meet the demands of forthcoming changes to 14-19 education provision in Hackney, including both national changes to the curriculum and the expansion of sixth form provision within the borough, and the likely impact of this on Careers Services provision.
- Training provision for young people in Hackney, focusing particularly on Work Based Learning Providers (WBLPs), E2E programmes, apprenticeships, and the promotion of closer working links between schools and WBLPs, especially in terms of referrals of suitable young people.
- Employment and work experience opportunities available to young people in Hackney, and the promotion of possibilities arising from major regeneration projects in and around the borough.
- Supporting those in the voluntary and community sector who work with NEET young people, and providing them with the information required to operate effectively.
- Increased access to information, advice and guidance for parents and carers of NEET or potential NEET young people.

B. Safeguarding and Child Protection in the Borough (Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

The 2006 Joint Area Review (JAR) of Hackney Children and Young People Services highlighted some areas of safeguarding as in need of improvement. Furthermore, several Commission Members had a strong interest in the review topic, arising in part from involvement with local schools. The review also attracted interest from Members of the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission.

How?

Evidence was gathered over a period of two months at three formal Commission meetings. The Commission heard from a number of officers working within Children and Young People's Services, and from representatives of key partner agencies.

The Commission also appointed a working group to lead the enquiry, which included representation from both Children and Young People and Health in

Hackney Scrutiny Commissions. In addition to the evidence heard in the Commission meetings, working group members conducted a number of interviews with Council officers and those working in child protection in schools, including designated child protection officers, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), social workers and police officers.

Findings

Members were satisfied that actions required to meet the safeguarding recommendations arising from the 2006 JAR were all either complete or progressing to target, and congratulated officers on their work in this area.

Members also considered issues relating to communication between schools and other key agencies. It was found that, although all schools acknowledged that significant process had been made over the past six years, there were still occasions when communication and feedback between schools and Children's Social Care was felt to be unsatisfactory. Expectations and assessment of risk also appeared to differ between some of the various agencies working in the field of child protection. Schools highlighted their excellent working relationship with the Vulnerable Pupils Team.

Members heard details of the Schools Cluster-Based Social Work Pilot Project being trialled at Skinners' Company School for Girls and a number of surrounding primary schools. This project was felt to be a great success in resolving some of the concerns felt by many of the schools outside of the pilot area.

Members also considered issues surrounding social worker recruitment and retention, and were impressed by the number of new initiatives being taken in this complex and difficult area.



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Recommendations

The Commission made a number of recommendations aiming to improve information sharing and feedback processes between Hackney schools and Children's Social Care.

The Commission made further recommendations relating to the training and support available to professionals working within a child protection environment.

The Commission also strongly endorsed the planned continuation and expansion of the Schools Cluster-Based Social Work Pilot Project, and the development of a new e-confident child protection referral process.

C. Procurement (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

A review of this area follows on from previous scrutiny involvement in the area. The procurement function in Hackney performs an important role in supporting the delivery of services. Hackney buys some £300 million of goods and services each year, across all areas of the Council. The Hackney Procurement Centre provides help and advice, and also ensures that procurement is undertaken within a framework of policies and procedures that support best practice. The overriding aim is to ensure that financial probity is maintained and that Hackney residents get value for money.



How?

The Commission approached this review through the identification of three key elements. Members sought to understand the current processes and practices as are implemented locally and the journey of improvement already undertaken in addition to the current legislative climate.

Members also held a number of discussions with both internal and external customers of the procurement service as well as the identification of what is believed to be best practice from elsewhere and how the Council might learn from this.

Findings

Through undertaking its review Members concluded that procurement within Hackney has continued to improve and develop. No major failings in the service were found but rather much to commend in the way that it has put in place a set of processes and structures, which appear effective. The scrutiny review found that the majority of the challenges facing the function are known about, and are being addressed.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were made relating to how existing processes and practices might be enhanced and improved so as to ensure that effective procurement continues to be a recognised and key part of all employees' jobs. The Commission is pleased to report that all such recommendations have been accepted.

The Commission also identified a number of areas where they felt the service may be developed in order to support the future direction of the authority and the delivery of its priorities which include how best to respond to the new imperatives for sustainability and social inclusion whilst ensuring that we continue to deliver value for money.

D. ICT (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

The effective use of Information and Communications Technology lies at the heart of the way that modern local government works and communicates with its stakeholders.

The Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission undertook this review in light of a relatively recent ICT Strategy paper which we judged set out a reasonable framework for how to progress as an authority. The time has now come for this strategy to be refreshed and Member input was invited as part of this exercise.

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How?

Members acknowledged the challenges of coming to fully understand the complexities and inter-workings of an efficient and effective ICT department and therefore appointed a consultant to act as their guide during this scrutiny.

Members received a number of briefings from Council officers relating to initiatives being undertaken and specific issues identified ranging from the letting of a new ICT Service Management Contract, new ways of working, through to issues associated with the use of Open Source Software.

Statistics relating to internet usage from the MORI survey were reviewed, and Council customers' and Members' opinions on the website sought. Members also received an introductory brief, detailed report identifying strengths and challenges within the Council and benchmarking data from their consultant. A visit to a comparable local authority was also undertaken.

Findings

The review aimed to identify and understand the role and needs of ICT within this local authority. As the review progressed, it became evident that ICT is a highly complex area but one that touches everyone working for or being served by the authority. There are few simple answers to the wide variety of issues raised. One area where the role of ICT appeared of paramount importance related to the importance placed by the Council on partnership working across both disciplines and organisations and the likely substantial need for new ICT investment to achieve such aims. Similarly ICT has a key role to play in the delivery of a wide number of corporate priorities and with that the change management that is required to deliver such projects as Service First.

Members identified that scope for more work to be done existed in relation to the management of ICT projects and ICT staff themselves – now is an appropriate time for such issues to be tackled as staff are in place who recognise and wish to take forward such issues but are also supported by the necessary financial stability.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were made relating to the currently largely devolved structure of the ICT function and requests made to explore how its key role in delivery of a variety of both high profile and potentially high risk corporate priorities and projects might be more fully realised.

The Commission identified a number of work streams which might helpfully result in improved accessibility and usage of the Council website. Members also recommended that the potential of ICT be more explicitly realised by local partners which they might achieve through an increased focus on such activities within Team Hackney.

The Commission concluded its review through a challenge session with the Deputy Mayor in March and proposes with the endorsement of the Overview and Scrutiny Board that the progressing of this report now pause whilst a revised strategy is developed. The Commission anticipates it will be invited to review this document before sending its report and findings to Cabinet and Council in tandem with a re-launched strategy.

E. GP and Primary Care Premises (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

The Government conducted a consultation to establish the views of the public and published a White Paper (Our Health, Our Care, Our Say). This Government agenda recognised that NHS and social care services should work more closely together and identified how delivery of services could be adapted to provide community based care services.

As a result of such initiatives there was an onus on Primary Care Trusts to develop delivery plans which would better support the flexible service and premises provisions required for community based healthcare.



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City and Hackney Primary Care Trust (CHtPCT) approached the Commission to fulfil its statutory role in relation to their consultation on GP and Primary Care Premises Proposals (Bigger: Brighter: Better: A Plan To Improve Your Neighbourhood Healthcare Services and Premises). The Commission chose to undertake a more substantive piece of work which could assist and support CHtPCT in the delivery of a more effective strategy for the local healthcare community.

How?

The Commission carried out its review by gathering evidence from partner organisations at scrutiny meetings between September 2006 and January 2007. The Commission heard from the Homerton Hospital, The Learning Trust, Children and Young People, the Council's Planning Services, Property Services, Service First Programme and Community Services, representatives from the voluntary sector and Team Hackney.

The Commission was also conscious of the need to get out of the Town Hall and better understand the issues of specific locations and ensure the views of the residents were adequately captured. The Commission therefore undertook a number of site visits to a variety of GP premises. The visits also enabled Members to hear the views of GPs and the staff affected by the proposals.

Findings

The site visits provided an understanding of the challenges CHtPCT encountered finding and acquiring suitable premises in Hackney when considering the density of the population and the limited building space available within the borough to assist in the delivery of their aim to provide modernised surgeries and health centres to meet the requirements of future service proposals.



Opinions were obtained relating to access to GPs' surgeries and new health centres highlighting concern about the distance

patients would need to travel especially for the very sick, elderly, and families with young children. Member opinion highlighted the need for premises to be located with access to good public transport links; CHtPCT acknowledged the need to actively manage this tension.

The transfer of services from secondary to primary care was generally well received barring concern about specialist services and the need for assurance that the quality of care would be maintained. Members noted the services would be provided in partnership with consultants traditionally hospital based specialist services. In summary the proposals hoped to release capacity within the Homerton to allow them to focus on more complex cases and also deliver the reductions in waiting times to meet national targets for referral to treatment, in addition to delivering services closer to a patient's home.

Recommendations

The Commission made a number of recommendations covering the main areas of concern highlighting:

- Accessibility
- Transport
- Transfer of services from secondary to primary care setting.

The recommendations have taken into account the challenges and restrictions faced by CHtPCT, and the Commission sees the proposals as an opportunity for the local authority (as main provider of social care) and health care trusts to implement joint-working arrangements and where possible provide integrated healthcare services as outlined in the White Paper.

The Commission believe the recommendations will, if implemented, assist the CHtPCT with the implementation of its strategy and provide assistance in areas such as planning, transportation and finding premises for community built developments by utilising resources from partner organisations through joint-working arrangements. The recommendations have also highlighted areas requiring further analysis to assess the impact of proposals for the local community and health care staff, in a bid to maintain and develop patient and GP relationships during a time of substantial change within NHS services.

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F. Registered Social Landlords and Estate Management (Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission wished to examine estate management standards applied by the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) operating within Hackney. The borough has 69 RSLs. The twenty largest RSLs account for 90% of the current stock. The Council is also a social housing provider.

The Council does not regulate RSLs in the borough, although local authorities are the statutory agencies charged with maintaining a strategic overview of housing needs and supply within their areas. As such, the Council has a role to play in taking an overview of the work of RSLs, and can use its influence to encourage better performance.

How?

In January the Commission visited an RSL multi-landlord estate to hear first hand some of the residents' concerns. Consistency of service and the coordination of repairs across multi-landlord estates were identified as needing improvement as well as concerns around anti social behaviour, crime and community safety. Some tenants expressed the view that there was confusion regarding the responsibility of the cleaning and maintenance of communal areas and hoped that communication between RSLs and the Council could also be improved.

The Commission also received briefings on multi-landlord estates which offered some possible solutions to residents' concerns. These included the possibility of devising management arrangements, agency agreements and contracts and protocols for sharing information amongst stakeholders to aid partnership working.

Members believe that as a result of the review process, Hackney Homes have already started work devising a new Noise Complaints procedure; a draft of which should be ready shortly.

During its review the Commission also met with the RSLs to discuss ways forward. Positive meetings took place with all actors committed to strengthening ways of

partnership working. Members are also aware that the RSLs have come together to form a task group to agree common standards of practice. Representatives from the Housing Management Project Group, Hackney Homes and the Community Safety Teams came to the Commission to present their individual approaches to addressing anti-social behaviour on RSL estates.

Findings

The review aimed to examine estate management standards applied by the RSLs operating within Hackney and to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the Council, RSLs and other affordable housing providers. Initial findings were that residents would benefit through the Council and its partners providing clear information about their roles and responsibilities, specifically within RSL and multi-landlord estates.

Information sharing is also key to the development of strong partnership working and the Council and its partners must identify the best means of providing easily accessible information.

The work of the Better Homes Partnership Board is highly regarded by RSLs and partners and is seen as a useful tool for engaging with the Council. It provides many of the RSLs with their main contact with Council officers and councillors.

As the review progressed, it became evident that this is a highly complex area and there are few simple answers to the wide variety of issues raised. Members therefore identified further sources of evidence they wished to hear, and the Co-Chairs of the Better Homes Partnership have agreed to present to the Commission on the Better Homes Partnership's strategic direction and vision.

The Commission will aim to make recommendations and approve a final report at the start of the 2007/08 municipal year.



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G. Safer Neighbourhoods (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)

Why?

Developing and supporting sustainable and strong communities is one of the most important roles of a local authority, but cannot be achieved by the local authority alone. Hackney Council, Hackney Police and other partners have already made great strides in making Hackney a cleaner and safer borough. However, residents still place crime and anti-social behaviour high in their list of concerns and priorities for the Council to address.

The aim of the scrutiny review was therefore to continue to promote a joined-up approach to enforcement between the key partner organisations in Hackney, and ensure a central position for the community in influencing enforcement priorities.

The implementation of Hackney's Enforcement Strategy, with particular emphasis on a 'One Council' approach and development of strong links with Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs), is one of the Council's major projects for 2006-2010. The Commission wished to monitor and make recommendations towards achieving these goals, focusing on a number of new developments in this area including the introduction of ward Community Advisory Panels, the restructure of Hackney's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, a co-location pilot for Shoreditch Neighbourhood and development of a local authority neighbourhood warden scheme.



How?

The Commission held a series of formal evidence gathering meetings with representatives of Hackney's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, staff responsible for setting up the Orsman Road co-location project, and the Secretary to the London Warden Resource Network.

Members also met informally with staff in a range of enforcement and support agencies and observed a number of multi-agency meetings, including an Anti-Social Behaviour Case Conference, a Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel, the Borough Crime Tasking Group, the Safer Cleaner Partnership Board and Safer Neighbourhood Team Community Advisory Panels.

Members visited the London Boroughs of Enfield, Southwark and Sutton, all Beacon Authorities in this area, to observe how they structure their partnership working and share data within the partnerships.

Findings

Throughout the review, Members were greatly encouraged by officers' commitment to enhancing their working practices, working in partnership with each other and taking into account the views of the community. The Commission particularly commended the fact that Hackney exceeded its crime reduction targets ahead of every other London borough; the launch of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and their Community Advisory Panels in every ward in the borough; the innovative aims of the Orsman Road co-location scheme; the appointment of Area Champions for Dalston, Hackney Central and Shoreditch; the efforts on the part of the Safer Cleaner Partnership Board to improve its accountability; the structure of the Anti-Social Behaviour Case Conferences; the work of the Hackney Homes Estates Safety Team; and the partnership-working demonstrated by the Safer Schools Partnership.

However the review also found that while levels of enforcement are rising, further measures could be taken to increase the Council's capacity for enforcement. Relationships between partners are often dependent on personnel to succeed, whereas other boroughs have more effective structures and processes in place. Councillors' relationship to, and role in, ward Community Advisory Panels was ambiguous.

Recommendations

The Commission made several recommendations to ensure capacity for enforcement is in place and that resources for enforcement are used as efficiently as possible.

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The Commission also made a number of recommendations to enhance partnership working, focusing on creating appropriate forums and structures for data sharing and co-ordination at neighbourhood and at borough level, rationalising the groups and policies dealing with anti-social behaviour, and ensuring intelligence can be captured and communicated in useful ways.

Further recommendations promote Councillor and community participation in priority-setting, and greater community development.

Finally, the Commission made recommendations to support the development of the Orsman Road project and to ensure a successful and well-publicised neighbourhood warden scheme.



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Holding Cabinet to Account

An important part of Overview and Scrutiny's 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 the Cabinet, or requesting reports from Cabinet Members on how recent decisions have been implemented or services improved.

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

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

The Board has reviewed quarterly progress on Key Projects, Best Value and Local Performance Indicators at an earlier stage than in previous years and on an exceptions basis to ensure focus on areas in need of attention. Cabinet Members and senior officers attended these sessions to answer Members' questions and give assurances that actions are in place to address under-performance.

- **Directorate Question Times (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Board asked each directorate over the course of the year to present a summary of their major tasks and

responsibilities, and in particular to respond to questions on social exclusion. This provided an excellent opportunity for new Members to increase their understanding of Council services, as well as for the Board to engage in dialogue with Cabinet Members and senior officers about the challenges they face and take an overview of how the Council is seeking to address social exclusion. The Board proposes the format continues in an evolving form in future years.

- **The Budget and Corporate Plan (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Board held an additional meeting in February to review the proposed Council Budget and Corporate Plan for 2007/08 prior to deliberations by Cabinet and Council. Members questioned the Mayor and senior officers on various aspects of the reports but overall welcomed the financial stability that was outlined and congratulated the Mayor on being able to set a budget with a 0% proposed increase.

- **Kings Crescent Estate (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

Following a deputation from residents, Full Council referred the matter of expenditure on

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Holding Cabinet to Account

maintenance and repairs on the Kings Crescent Estate to the Board for further investigation. The Board held three sessions with resident representatives, officers from Hackney Homes and Council representatives to establish what had occurred and ways to progress the issues. Members believe progress has been made and will be monitoring this in the coming months.

- **Service First (Overview and Scrutiny Board)**

The Board considered the measures the Council is taking to become a more customer-focused organisation, focusing on the Hackney Service Centre, the Service First accommodation programme, the MORI residents' survey and customer segmentation. Members were particularly keen to discuss how the Council would foster a cultural change amongst staff and how the Council is ensuring its services meet the needs of all residents.

- **Review of the Learning Trust Annual Update 2007/08 (Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission)**

The Learning Trust's annual update was reviewed by the Commission over two meetings in January and

February prior to Council agreement. The Commission focussed on Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets, the implementation of education and education initiatives, the involvement of stakeholders and the continuous improvement in education and education-related services in accordance with best value principles. The update for 2007/08 was approved subject to the condition that the Trust provide details of its proposed budget for 2007-08 and financial plans, as required by the Client.

- **Building Schools for the Future (Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission and Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

Owing to the substantial financial investment coming to Hackney under the heading of Building Schools for the Future, the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission arranged for joint briefing to be delivered to it and the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission. Members satisfied themselves that this large project was being managed in a rigorous and responsible manner. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission has monitored progress on Hackney's Building Schools for the

Future programme with regular updates throughout the year.

- **Elections Process (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

In October the Commission considered a report on the 2006 Local Government Elections. The report detailed the successes from the way the election was run and any lessons that might be learnt and put into place going forward.

- **Financial Oversight (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

The Commission has regularly reviewed and considered the Overall Financial Position report as is submitted to Cabinet. As a result of this activity the Commission has called in for additional questioning a number of overspending areas in addition to reviewing in more detail the areas of both debt management and capital programmes expenditure.

- **Service Improvement Review – Members Complaints and Enquiries (Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission)**

The Commission was invited to participate in the early stages of the

scoping of this review and nominated two representatives who have met with officers to discuss progress on the review. The Commission will be offered a report on outcomes and proposals to take the issue forward early in the next municipal year.

- **City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Trust Budget (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

Following three budget top slicing requests by NHS London from City and Hackney teaching Primary Care Trust's budget, the Commission decided to receive regular financial updates and monitor their budget for the year 2006/07. Health Scrutiny was kept informed of the financial position and monthly budget returns; this enabled the Commission to monitor the impact or affects the



4 Holding Cabinet to Account

budget changes had on service provision.

- **Homerton Hospital Service Changes (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

The Commission requested the attendance of the Homerton Management Team to address the concerns and answer questions about the trust's service changes and finances in response to information highlighted in the local press and by staff employed at the hospital. The Commission was advised that as a result of a reduction in the trust's income and the effects of the budget top slicing experienced by all health trusts in London, the service

changes were implemented and financial constraints experienced.

- **LBH Smoke Free Strategy (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

The Commission was informed about the new smoke free regulation coming into force on 1st July 2007. The Commission was advised of the strategy being adopted by the Council and the impact of this new regulation on the Council and on business in the borough.

- **Draft Healthy Workforce Strategy (Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

The draft Healthy Workforce Strategy was presented to the Commission and the Commission welcomed the introduction of this strategy and supported the ambition of the Council in creating a workforce which is healthier, happier and more productive.

- **Service Improvement Review – Keeping the Streets Clean (Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

Stage one of this review began in July 2006 when officers explained the purpose of the review and set out



how Members might be involved in the process. The terms of reference were set and a consultant was appointed in August 2006.

The key findings and statistics of the review were shared with the Commission in April. Stakeholder input will be developed as part of the ongoing process. The consultants report on the public realm issues identified as part of this Service Review has now been completed and presented to the Safer, Greener Partnership Board.

- **Empty Properties (Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

In September the Commission assessed the situation in the borough regarding empty properties. The Commission were presented with the results of a street survey of 400 properties carried out by the Private Sector Housing and Council Tax teams. Members heard that the investigation found there are approximately 450 properties within the borough that have been vacant for more than six months. Initial figures suggested that the number was in excess of 1,300.

In addition the Commission received a presentation from the Chief Executive of the Empty Homes Agency regarding examples of best practice and ways to overcome many of the common problems associated with empty and derelict properties.

Members agreed that the results of the street survey will form the basis of the work programme for newly appointed staff, who will concentrate on enforcement action to bring about the return to use of the long term derelict street properties and flats over shops.

- **Affordable Housing (Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

In September 2006 Members reviewed what defines 'affordable' in housing in Hackney. Members heard how the Council, through the Better Homes Partnership, is coming together with local Registered Social Landlords to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy agreed by the Council's Cabinet in March 2006.

This work has been given added impetus by the recent decision by Team Hackney to make increased

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Holding Cabinet to Account

access to Low Cost Home Ownership one of five local priorities under the Local Area Agreement currently being negotiated.

Members established that the Strategy Project Board is seeking to address a definition of affordability with a view to arriving at an Affordability Framework to be used in the negotiation of future housing supply.

- **Supplementary Planning Document – Residential Extensions and Alterations (Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission)**

The draft Supplementary Planning Document was considered by the Commission in March.

Members heard how the guidance contained in this document has been based on an analysis of the existing townscape and character within the borough together with an understanding of the borough's residential building stock and an examination of how it can be extended or altered in the most appropriate manner.

Members considered this potentially contentious issue to have been handled in a robust way.

- **Hackney Advice Strategy (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)**

The Commission agreed to facilitate community involvement in development of a Hackney Advice Strategy, assess whether there has been appropriate stakeholder consultation and whether the strategy reflects the outcomes of the consultation, and make recommendations to feed into the strategy.

The Commission reviewed the initial scope for an Advice Strategy, reviewed the consultation document for the strategy, and met informally with officers to review their evidence base and make suggestions for the consultation process. Members helped officers to facilitate consultation events during February and March 2007, including questioning users and non-users of advice services at Age Concern and the North London Muslim Community Centre and on the Hackney Playbus. They also attended a meeting with advice providers.

As the timetable for the Advice Strategy changed during the course of the year, the Commission has not been able to complete the review.

The Commission is likely to review the consultation report and make final recommendations for the strategy at its first meeting following the Council AGM.

- **Regeneration Strategy 2007-2017 (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)**

The Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission scrutinised the initial scope and project plan for this strategy, prior to more detailed research being undertaken by the Council. Members broadly welcomed the proposed scope, emphasising that the strategy should be a practical document and include a programme of proposals. They highlighted the need for proper communication of the issues from an early stage, and their views that the scope should include consideration of crime and community safety and creating sustainable communities. The Commission will continue to monitor development of the strategy in 2007/08.

- **2012 Olympics (Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission)**

The Council's Chief Olympic Officer presented a selection of the 25 Olympic-related projects to the

Commission in September 2006 before they were put to Cabinet for approval, focusing on Hackney Marshes, transport, training issues and sport in schools. He noted Members' concerns about jobs and skills training for local people and businesses and the need for the Olympic legacy to be inclusive. The Commission recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Board that transport issues should be addressed as part of any joint borough scrutiny review.



5 Feedback

Finding an effective way of monitoring the value added by Overview and Scrutiny continues to be a challenge for all local authorities, but one on which we think we are making progress. One means is to track the results of our recommendations.

This year, Overview and Scrutiny Board also agreed a revised and standardised process for evaluating all in-depth reviews we carry out, asking Members, officers and stakeholders involved in the review to comment on a number of areas including how the review was scoped, carried out, the likely impact of its outcomes and any ways of improving the process.

In addition to this, we devised a survey with which to benchmark Overview and Scrutiny in Hackney against the Centre

for Public Scrutiny's Four Principles of Good Scrutiny. We found that for the most part scrutiny in Hackney is Member-led, looks at the right issues, operates in a mature environment, involves partner organisations where appropriate and follows up its recommendations. However there are a number of areas where we might improve during the next year, as outlined in the introduction.

Professor Steve Leach visited Hackney in May 2006 to speak about Overview and Scrutiny and will return to assess the progress we have made in April 2007, along with Jessica Crowe, Director of the Centre for Public Scrutiny.



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Community Engagement

This remains a priority. One way of ensuring the community is more closely involved in Overview and Scrutiny is through co-opting members of the public as members of Scrutiny Commissions.

A common policy on co-optation was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in July 2006, following which the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission co-opted two members of the public. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission continues to have seven co-optees representing parent governors and faith groups. The policy gives other Commissions the option of co-opting members of the public as standing members or for specific reviews in the future.

All of the Commissions publicised their reviews in Hackney Today prior to commencement to encourage interested members of the community to be involved.

The Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held a Health Scrutiny Conference on 5 March to give them a greater understanding of local views prior to the Annual Healthcheck process. 50 people attended from

local voluntary groups and the wider community.

We have also worked more closely with the Council's Consultation Team this year, who for example assisted the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission to develop and analyse an online survey about ICT facilities. The team also devised and promoted a survey asking residents to indicate potential areas for review in 2007/08, which received over 400 responses. We appreciate the support we have received from the team, which has enabled us to consult with the community more effectively.

Furthermore we have aimed to take scrutiny out of the Town Hall and into the community where appropriate, for example Members of the Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission visited GP surgeries to talk to staff affected by the PCT's premises proposals; and the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission visited schools in the borough to talk to teachers about safeguarding and child protection issues. The Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission visited the New Kingshold Estate to speak to residents about their

experiences of living in a multi-landlord estate. Members of the Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission helped to facilitate consultation events for the Hackney Advice Strategy, including questioning users and non-users of advice services at Age Concern and the North London Muslim Community Centre and on the Hackney Playbus.

Finally, we continue to talk to Team Hackney partnership organisations about their priorities, the challenges they face and how Overview and Scrutiny can contribute towards their agendas.



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Potential Areas for Reviews 2007/08

The Overview and Scrutiny Board held a discussion at its meeting in March 2007 about potential areas of work for next year following consultation with Cabinet Members, senior officers, Team Hackney partners, the wider Member cohort and the community.

There are currently five standing Scrutiny Commissions who will be responsible for carrying out reviews, with the Overview and Scrutiny Board responsible for co-ordinating and managing their work. Our experiences have shown us that each Scrutiny Commission can realistically expect to complete at most two in-depth reviews per municipal year. Membership of the Commissions will be agreed following the Council's AGM and formal work programmes will then be devised, based upon the areas already identified.

In addition to the indicative list identified below, the Overview and Scrutiny Board will continue to monitor the Council's Cabinet Forward Plan and Consultation Forward Plan for other potential items for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny.

A. Holding the Cabinet to Account

We aim to do this in the following ways:

i. Reviewing 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. Areas of consistent underperformance may be referred by the Board to individual Commissions for more detailed investigation.

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 have been scheduled into the Commission forward plans.

B. Potential areas for In-Depth Reviews – Contributing to Policy Development

A number of potential theme-based areas for review have been identified and are detailed below.

Overview and Scrutiny Board

- Directorate QT - Value for money theme
- Retains an interest in Olympic project.

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission

- Youth crime and prevention review, including
 - o School exclusion
 - o Pupil attendance
 - o The Youth Offending Team and how it operates
 - o The Safer Schools Police Unit.

Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission

- Team Hackney
- Human Resources and Workforce Strategy.

Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

- Dignity in Care
- In-patient access to Mental Health (with an additional BME focus).

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

- Green Spaces
- Exploring how the authority might respond to the climate change agenda.

Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission

- Master planning of Dalston, Hackney Central and Hackney Wick: How to grow a Local Economy and knowing our customers (businesses)
- Social Inclusion & Equalities.



Contact Details

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

Overview and Scrutiny Board Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission	Ben Vinter	0208 356 3441 Ben.Vinter@hackney.gov.uk
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission	Clair Bantin	0208 356 3029 Clair.Bantin@hackney.gov.uk
Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission	Tracey Anderson	0208 356 3312 Tracey.Anderson@hackney.gov.uk
Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission	Sarah Harrison	0208 356 3309 Sarah.Harrison@hackney.gov.uk

Further information about the scrutiny process can also be found at www.hackney.gov.uk/scrutiny.

How to Get Involved

Overview and Scrutiny welcome public involvement, all of our meetings are open to the public and schedules are published on the Council's website and in the local press. We want to know your thoughts on topics that are under review as well as subjects that those who live, work or play in the borough believe we should be looking at in future years.

To find out what reviews are currently being undertaken by each Commission, you can contact any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Team (contact details listed at the back of this report) any Hackney Councillor or you may prefer to visit the designated section of our website at www.hackney.gov.uk/scrutiny.

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Bengali

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Somali

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Chinese

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