Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10
Scrub: Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10

Scrub: Scrutiny in Redbridge - some endorsements...

“With the help of the Scrutiny team, the working group on cost-effective communications focused on the areas where real improvements and savings could be made across the Council. The final report laid out the issues and evidence very clearly, and Members made recommendations that, if accepted and implemented, will certainly improve the effectiveness of Council communications. In my view the project was a success, and the scrutiny team made a big contribution to that success.”

Eddie Gibb
Head of Marketing and Communications

“This has been a most challenging year! Apart from scrutinising topics such as swine flu, diabetes, Tuberculosis and breast screening, the Scrutiny Committee also considered and referred the health reorganisation proposals to the Secretary of State. In addition, local Councillors co-operated with Councillors from other Boroughs in a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise patient transport, hospital performance and the proposals of the Health for North East London consultation.”

Councillor Ralph Scott
Chairman of Health Scrutiny

“I am proud to say during 2009/10, this Scrutiny Committee held the Council and the Police to account on community safety issues, monitored the ‘Prevent Strategy’ and put forward issues such as Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriages on the agenda of Domestic Violence. In addition, as a result of our scrutiny, works are being carried out to prevent flooding in areas near Roding Valley and CCTV is being strengthened to improve detection of crime. We hope our work helps allay the fear of crime in the area and makes the Borough a safer place to live.”

Councillor Balvinder Saund
Chairman of Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

“The innovative cross party Member workshop has had far reaching benefits testing and fine tuning the non-technical value management tool for the final prioritisation of major maintenance schemes. This has been both ground breaking and value adding.”

Dave Renvoize
Chief Highways and Engineering Services Officer

“Have enjoyed showing a group of interested Scrutiny Members the workings of a fairly complex service. The fresh look at some of the basics has helped the team re-examine the way we do things. The supportive outcomes have helped morale enormously.”

Dave Cuthell
Chief Cleansing and Direct Services Officer

“As representative of the Diocese of Chelmsford I have been particularly pleased that Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee included the agreed syllabus for religious education in its agenda this year. I have learned much about the unfunded mandates which central government imposes on a local authority.”

Rowena Rudkin, co-opted member of Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee

“The two Scrutiny Committees that cover Adult Social Services and Health provide an opportunity for both challenge and positive recognition of key services that impact directly on Redbridge residents. This scrutiny ensures that there is transparency and shared responsibility for the quality of services, which in my view is a good thing.”

John Powell
Director of Adult Social Services

“When we have spoken at Health Scrutiny, albeit only for a limited amount of time, everyone has made us very welcome and treated us with the utmost respect and courtesy.

In future at Health Scrutiny Meetings we would like Councillors to be more forthright when questioning representatives from the various health trusts so that they are held to account.”

Lorraine Silver and Vivien Nathan – residents and regular attendees at Health Scrutiny Committee
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Foreword

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members and officers for their excellent work, and I am pleased to present the third annual report under our scrutiny arrangements.

The scrutiny process is working well with some real achievements. The majority of recommendations are being accepted by Cabinet, leading to tangible improvements in areas, such as recycling. Scrutiny is having an impact on policy development, for example on emerging Local Development Framework documents, and in service provision, for example in relation to local health services.

Scrutiny provides an opportunity to work with local people to consider significant issues that are of concern to them. Members of the public are also increasingly involved in reviews. More than 500 residents completed a questionnaire about their views on facilities in parks; 148 young people gave us their views on music and drama provision; 160 transport service users commented on the quality of the service; and 60 members of the public attended a scrutiny committee held away from the Town Hall, in Barkingside.

The report sets out the work conducted and achievements for each of the Scrutiny Committees during 2009/10. It also summarises the development of the scrutiny function which arose from the implementation in 2009/10 of provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

A robust scrutiny process can improve executive decision making, and is in the interest of Redbridge residents. We have taken the opportunity of learning from our experiences, and have introduced an Overview Committee which, from May 2010, will play a greater role in policy development as well as being responsible for co-ordinating scrutiny across the Council. This is now supported by four further Scrutiny Committees (Children’s Services and Leisure; Housing and Social Services; Environment and Community Safety; and Health). The new process will ensure that scrutiny continues to support the improvement of public services in the Borough.

Councillor Keith Prince
Leader of the Council
London Borough of Redbridge
Executive Summary

This Annual Report provides feedback on the work of Redbridge’s Scrutiny Committees undertaken during 2009/10 by outlining…

- Achievements and successes of each of the Scrutiny Committees in 2009/10;
- The various scrutiny reviews undertaken;
- Some of the key recommendations made to Cabinet; and
- Statutory developments of the scrutiny function in 2009/10.

Scrutiny forms a key part of the Council’s ‘checks and balances’, and provides one of the most important ways in which Councillors can pursue the interests of local people. In Redbridge we do this by…

- Providing an opportunity for policy development, service improvement, and transparency in the provision of public services;
- Via eight Scrutiny Committees, involving Councillors from all parties – and this year with Chairmen from two parties;
- In-depth scrutiny reviews;
- Undertaking post and pre decision scrutiny, reviewing the budget and monitoring performance of services.

This year - 2009/10 - was the third year with a dedicated team of officers supporting the Scrutiny Committees, and this resource has ensured that the scrutiny process has taken on a higher profile both within the Council, and externally. Key to this has been…

- The development of a detailed work programme for each Scrutiny Committee, helping to focus the work on its priorities;
- Service improvements being identified across all portfolios;
- More recommendations being made to and agreed by Cabinet;
- Progress on external scrutiny; and
- Regular Member meetings.

In continuing to deliver successful scrutiny in Redbridge we will be aiming to…

- Introduce more focus to the work of Scrutiny Committees;
- Ensure that the majority of scrutiny recommendations are accepted and implemented by Cabinet, NHS Trusts and other decision making bodies;
- Ensure that scrutiny work is better informed and evidence-based by having improved partnership working and communication;
- Develop relationships with Members, officers and external partners to prepare for effective use of new powers of external scrutiny;
- Assist Members to become more effective scrutineers by continuing with communication, liaison and training and development activities;
- Continue Scrutiny Team development.

A key and overarching success for the scrutiny function during 2009/10 has been…

- 92% of recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee Working Groups were agreed by Cabinet.
An Introduction to Scrutiny

The overview and scrutiny function in local government is at the heart of the Councillor’s role as an elected representative. It is the function that the majority of members will be engaged in, as Councils have moved to smaller executive groups following the Local Government Act 2000. Whether they are involved or not, every Councillor will be affected by the work of overview and scrutiny.

The overview and scrutiny function is a statutory power and a duty - a power for backbenchers to hold the executive to account, and a duty to review policies and public services on behalf of the public. Introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, scrutiny roles and powers have been extended since through various Acts.

The Health and Social Care Act 2001 gives Councils the responsibility for scrutinising local NHS trusts, including Primary Care Trusts. Powers were further expanded by the Police and Justice Act 2006, giving powers to scrutinise the work of Crime and Disorder Partnerships (the Community Safety Scrutiny Committee has taken on this statutory role).

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gives more powers to local government to scrutinise partner organisations. It also brought in other provisions that affect how scrutiny committees work – including powers for creating joint committees, and local problem resolution through the Councillor Call for Action. These provisions require authorities to ensure that their overview and scrutiny arrangements enable any member to refer a relevant matter to a scrutiny committee.

Most recently the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 requires local authorities to have a designated Scrutiny Officer, broadens the scope for setting up joint overview and scrutiny committees and enables overview and scrutiny committees to seek a wider range of information from partner organisations.

When it works, overview and scrutiny is the most effective way for Councillors to hold a mirror up to both the Executive and all those who are responsible for the delivery of public services to fulfil the core responsibility of the Council, and other providers of local public services, and ensure community wellbeing.
What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny acts as a check and balance on the Council’s decision maker (the Cabinet) by holding it to account for its decisions. Scrutiny aims to:

- Improve services for local people and their communities;
- Ensure that Cabinet is accountable to the public;
- Improve the performance of the Council’s services;
- Improve the performance of other public services for which the Council has responsibility or is a stakeholder in;
- Actively engage local people in the scrutiny process and to promote issues that are of importance and of relevance to them.

Who is involved?

All Councillors who do not hold a Cabinet post, and voluntary co-optees, supported by a dedicated Scrutiny Team.

Is scrutiny a political activity?

Scrutiny is a key part of the political process; however it is not party political. Scrutiny Committees and Working Groups are made up of Councillors from across all the political groups.
Scrubiny in Redbridge

We have eight Scrutiny Committees, which are politically representative of the Council:

- Adult Social Services and Housing
- Children’s Services
- Community Safety
- Environment and Highways
- Health
- Leisure
- Planning and Regeneration
- Resources and Finance

Terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committees are wide ranging and include:

- Pre-decision scrutiny – influencing the development of strategies, policies and plans
- Post-decision scrutiny – scrutinising the appropriateness and effectiveness of strategies, policies and plans
- Service review – monitoring and evaluating the performance of services
- Budget scrutiny – particularly focusing on efficiency and whether resources are linked to priorities.

The Committees meet five times a year, and can set up time-limited working parties with specific terms of reference for in-depth investigations. As Scrutiny Committees are not decision-making bodies, the Cabinet determines all recommendations. The committees do not focus solely on Council services - apart from the specific remit of the Health Scrutiny Committee to examine the work of external health service providers, other Scrutiny Committees can undertake scrutiny of external bodies that provide local services.

There is a Scrutiny Unit with a dedicated budget for carrying out scrutiny activities and research. Scrutiny Committees undertook nine in-depth reviews during 2009-10. To date, 92% of recommendations that have been made by Scrutiny Committees have been agreed by Cabinet.

A survey of Scrutiny Members undertaken in March 2009 identified…

- The majority of Members who responded were satisfied or very satisfied with the scrutiny arrangements in Redbridge.
- The most positive responses from members were about Working Groups and in particular officer support. 100% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with scrutiny officers’ support of Working Groups.
- Members responded that the primary success of scrutiny at Redbridge has been the Working Groups.
- Other successes include Work Programmes, involvement of Members and that scrutiny has had more impact on policy than before.

The following diagram shows the position of scrutiny in the Council’s democratic structure.
Roles and Responsibilities:
Made up of the Leader of the Council and 9 Cabinet Members - the Cabinet is the main executive decision making body of the Council and makes decisions in line with the budget and policy framework.

Area Committees
Roles and Responsibilities
There are 7 Area Committees, made up of the ward Councillors for each area. These decision-making bodies have been set up to encourage local people to have a say and be heard on local issues.

Other committees including Standards, Regional Planning, Licensing, Regulatory, Audit and Advisory Panels

Cabinet
Roles and Responsibilities:
Council is responsible for setting the budget and Council Tax. Council appoints the Leader, who appoints the Cabinet, and agrees the membership of Council bodies. It is also responsible for agreeing statutory plans as set out in the Council’s Constitution.

Roles and Responsibilities:
Resources and Finance

Children’s Services

Planning and Regeneration

Adult Social Services and Housing

Leisure

Environment and Highways

Health

Community Safety

Roles and Responsibilities:
Scrutiny Committees have the role of holding the Cabinet to account, developing policy and reviewing existing Council policies and services. They explore issues of public concern and areas of poor performance and, in this way, contribute to the Council’s improvement agenda.

Council 63 Members
Adult Social Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee

This Committee successfully balances scrutiny of two Cabinet portfolios – Adult Social Services and Housing, including the Council’s ALMO, Redbridge Homes. Both Cabinet Members and Redbridge Homes representatives have been questioned regularly about priorities, service delivery and future plans. Performance and budget information has been monitored regularly, drawing attention to any areas of concern.

The Working Group was:

**Dementia Strategy Working Group** met with the Redbridge Dementia Partnership to hear about the wide range of dementia services being delivered in Redbridge and how organisations within the Partnership are responding to the National Dementia Strategy. The Group undertook a number of visits, including visits to Chadwell House, the Dementia Resource Centre and the Memory Clinic at Grovelands Day Hospital. Recommendations included increasing awareness of dementia among public and professionals, increasing dementia awareness among GPs, regular and continuing monitoring of dementia services in Redbridge and improving services for younger people with dementia and people with learning disabilities and dementia.

**Light touch scrutiny included:**

- *Transition from adolescent to adulthood for people with learning disabilities* – considered arrangements for people with learning disabilities as they move from adolescent to adulthood, to help preparations for a demographic peak in 2012
- *Redbridge Homes* – performance (a report was taken at each meeting in order to monitor and assist with improvement ahead of an Audit Commission re-inspection)
- *Strategy for older people – ten years on* – reviewed the progress made in implementing the strategy for older people, including the proposed care village
- *Empty Homes Strategy* - reviewed performance on the current strategy and considered proposed changes to the strategy
- *Voluntary Sector Funding* – annual report to review voluntary sector funding of community care and learning disabilities services
- *Voluntary Sector Funding, Impact Assessment* – considered the impact on voluntary sector groups who have not been able to access funding under new arrangements
- *Transforming adult social care* – scrutinised progress towards personalising care, focusing on the development of care pathways and the safeguarding of adults

The Committee also monitored progress on the implementation of recommendations from the Disabled Facilities Grant Working Group, which met during 2008/09.
At each meeting the Committee considered the minutes of the Borough Housing Panel (a forum for tenants and leaseholders), which represents the views of those who have the Council as their landlord. The Committee took up issues as a result of considering these minutes - e.g. anti-social behaviour.

Other activities that took place:

- **Social Services Conferences** – lead members of the Committee from two political parties attended the European Social Service Conference in June 2009, and representatives from three political parties attended the National Children and Adult Social Services Conference in October 2009. Reports feeding back on both conferences were provided to all Members of the Committee.

- **Council’s 2009/10 revenue and capital budgets** - the Committee scrutinised and commented on draft Council budget proposals in January 2010.

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**Key successes in 2009/10**

- Engaged with voluntary sector groups and NHS Redbridge as part of the Dementia Strategy Working Group
- Hosted a stall at the Council’s World Mental Health day to hear the views of people using dementia services and to promote scrutiny
- Visited Buttsbury Estate and met with officers from Redbridge Homes to consider issues around anti-social behaviour
Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee

The Committee scrutinises the Children’s Services portfolio, including the provision and commissioning of various integrated health, social care and education services for children, young people and their families.

The Working Groups were:

School Places Working Group – this responded to growing pressure on school places by examining projections, admissions, future place needs and potential sites for new places. Recommendations included planning for higher demand for at least five years, using more localised data to refine these projections, annual briefings for Members on admission processes, making a wide-ranging search for potential sites in areas of greatest need and investigating support for parents faced with taking children long distances to school.

Music and Drama Services Working Group – this examined the current financing of these services, identified opportunities to maintain and, if possible, expand the services, examined service functions, accessibility, achievements and user satisfaction, and recommended improvements aimed at giving better value for money. The Working Group visited other music services in Northamptonshire, Hampshire and Newham and talked to the Arts Council (London) about the Borough’s unique drama centre. Young people’s attitudes to and interest in music and drama were tested by a survey in schools and youth forums, resulting in 148 returns. Recommendations included both efficiencies and opportunities to help these high quality services weather a difficult financial time.

Light touch scrutiny included:

- Race equality in schools
- Implementation of 14-19 reforms
- Children and Young People’s Plan review
- Work of the children’s rights officer
- Evaluation and development of the Children’s Trust
- Religious education in schools
- Results of School and Early Years Providers Inspections
- Complaints
- Childcare sufficiency
- Local Safeguarding Children Board annual report
The Committee also monitored progress on the implementation of recommendations from a 2008/9 Working Group on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and continued to monitor implementation of the new school meals contract that was put in place after a Scrutiny Working Group on school meals in 2007/8.

Other activities that took place:

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - the findings of the previous year’s Working Group on CAMHS were used as a catalyst in a partnership workshop to develop a new five year strategy for CAMHS, with the Chairman of the Working Group and the scrutiny officer participating in the workshop.

Young People’s Safety in the Community - a briefing from officers in Community Safety, the Youth Offending Service, Fusion and the Borough Police enabled members to scrutinise work to create safer schools and neighbourhoods; reducing anti-social behaviour and substance abuse; prevent youth crime; and reduce reoffending among young offenders.

Council’s 2010/11 revenue and capital budgets - the Committee scrutinised and commented on draft Council budget proposals in January 2010.

Key successes in 2009/10

- The previous year’s Working Group report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services underpinned the development of a new strategy for local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- The Music and Drama Services Working Group brought in advice and ideas from other high performing music services and from the Arts Council (London)
- Responding to a high level of local concern about pressure on school places, the Committee quickly established a Working Group able to investigate and report in time to feed into budget processes for the coming year.
Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

The Committee examines the activity of the Community Safety portfolio - Community Protection, Environmental Health, Parks Police, Streetscene, Emergency Planning and Monitoring, and work to support the Crime and Disorder Partnership. Much of this work is a statutory requirement involving enforcement of legislation, or advice and direct service provision. The Council’s aim is to make ‘Redbridge: a safer place to live’; so the Committee focused on the themes most relevant to this aim.

Two of the Committee’s meetings were issue based, with speakers invited to encourage discussion:

- Our November meeting focused on crime, and we received a presentation from the Deputy Borough Commander which dealt with security issues around the Kenneth More Theatre, assaults, Area Crime Reduction Groups, licensing issues, honour based violence, and the mobile police station. The Kenneth More Theatre Manager also updated us on safety issues around the Theatre. We discussed Members’ involvement in Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving Panels and Safer Neighbourhood Team Panels, and took into account the difficulties of establishing a local mobile police unit.

- The April meeting enabled us to consider how offenders are accommodated in Redbridge. Speakers from the Probation Service and the Redbridge Housing Service outlined the role of London Probation, in particular its housing role, and how it managed risk. We noted that an application for a bail hostel had been successfully resisted and considered it vital that Members be informed of any proposal to locate bail hostels or supported offender accommodation in their ward.

Scrutiny items and other reports considered included:

- *Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny Regulations 2009*) – detailed implementation of the Committee’s functions in relation to scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

- *Cabinet Member Presentations* – regular presentation from the Cabinet Member on portfolio priorities and question/answer session

- *Flood warning issued by the Environment Agency in February 2009* – how the Council responded to this

- *Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Partnership Plan 2008-2011* – first annual review of Plan, (also required by legislation) and key partnership projects that had contributed to delivery of the Plan

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- Crime and Disorder in Ilford Town Centre – focussing on crime prevention in this major commercial centre and transport hub, used by high numbers of people
- Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 – implications of legislation
- Cemetery Contract – review
- Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ) – we were advised on the means for allowing local authorities to restrict the impact made by the accumulation of licensed premises, and recommended the establishment of a CIZ for Ilford Town Centre
- Council’s 2010/11 revenue and capital budgets - the Committee scrutinised and commented on draft Council budget proposals in February 2010

The Committee received Cabinet’s response to the recommendations from the 2008/09 Working Groups i.e. Value for Money in Drugs and Alcohol Services and Domestic Violence, and monitored progress on their implementation.

Committee Members have also attended the following Conferences and reported back to the Committee:

- Capitas 4th National Conference “Preventing Violent Extremism” – 22 October 2009
- Government Office for London launch of its “Prevent Toolkit” – 19 November 2009

Key successes in 2009/10

- Interest in the Preventing Violent Extremism work
- Public meeting with Borough Commander focussing on local police performance, recent initiatives and current crime and disorder matters
- Focused on preventing crime and disorder in Ilford Town Centre
Environment and Highways Scrutiny Committee

The Committee scrutinises the Environment and Highways portfolio, which is responsible for the cleanliness of the Borough and the state of the streets, and the protection and enhancement of the urban environment through the enforcement of a wide variety of regulations and legislation. Each impact on everyone in Redbridge and creates an impression of the Borough.

This year, the Committee ran two Working Groups:

**Transport Service Working Group** was set up to identify opportunities for improvements to service provision, reducing the environmental impact, and to consider funding flows and opportunities. In particular the Working Group has considered or investigated:

- the scope and function of the Transport Service
- user satisfaction
- how the Transport Service is financed, reviewing the need for contracting out some support activity
- the scope for attracting additional external contracts
- opportunities for reducing the environmental impact of the provision of the Transport Service

Recommendations covered:

- the Transport Service continuing to fund the Vehicle Renewal Fund at the appropriate level, to ensure that vehicles are replaced at the optimum time
- Cabinet to be reminded that the ‘Drivers Road Safety Policy’ is in place, and whilst this is fully complied with by the Cleansing and Direct Services, it does have implications for all other Council Service Areas
- the driver training currently being provided to Transport Service drivers should be rolled-out across the Council to include all essential and casual drivers

**Highways Asset Management Plan Working Group** considered the proposed prioritisation model for identifying highway maintenance work to make it a visible, clear and transparent process. This involved running a workshop session, facilitated by consultants W.S. Atkins, which allowed Members to take part in two sessions – apportioning weighting and undertaking a prioritisation review.

In considering the prioritisation process and taking part in a workshop, the Working Group was able to make recommendations, which will embed the process into the implementation of the Highways Asset Management Plan Policy Review and Update, and ensure that the prioritisation process is more transparent.
There was light-touch scrutiny of a number of items including:

- **Council’s 2009/10 revenue and capital budgets** - the Committee scrutinised and commented on draft Council budget proposals in January 2010

- **Cabinet Member’s presentation** – regular updates from Cabinet member and opportunity for the Committee to ask questions

- **Paving of front gardens** – reviewed current policies and considered the effects of increased parking control in residential areas

- **Winter service review** – reviewed existing strategy in light of last year’s bad weather and made recommendations to Cabinet, particularly in relation to the storage of salt

- **Waste Management Plan** – considered the draft plan and reviewed current policy and legislation relevant to waste management in Redbridge

- **Redbridge Environmental Action Plan** – monitored progress in implementing the Plan, and noted key projects that had been completed since it was adopted

- **Football in streets** – considered a report on the highways implications of a proposed byelaw to ban anti-social football in the streets

- **Street trees** – considered current policies for protecting and managing the Borough’s street trees and opportunities for increasing the number of street trees in Redbridge

- **Redbridge Environmental Action (REAct) Plan** - received a report outlining the aims of REAct and considered progress made in implementing actions

- **CCTV enforcement of highways** – considered the use of CCTV for highways enforcement, which came into force on 1 July 2009

### Key successes in 2009/10

- A varied work programme, dealing with Highways, Cleansing and Environmental issues
- Community engagement in the Transport Service Scrutiny Working Group
- We undertook the first workshop in the country to involve Councillors in considering weighting and prioritisation processes in relation to highway maintenance work
Health Scrutiny Committee

The Committee has the power to “review and scrutinise matters relating to the health service in the local authority’s area, and to make reports and recommendations on such matters” as provided by the Health and Social Care Act 2001.

The Working Group was:

The **Homelessness, Vulnerable People & Health Working Group** assessed initiatives currently in place to tackle homelessness in the Borough and to address the health needs of homeless and vulnerable people. The Working Group undertook visits to Redbridge Night Shelter, Redbridge Welcome Centre and Thames Reach Day Centre in Hackney. Recommendations include better access to dental and podiatry services, training for GPs in understanding the complex needs of homeless people and improved communication and partnership working by the Council and NHS organisations to support the newly established ‘Places of Change’ projects.

There were several elements to the work of this Committee:

**Developing good working relationships** through regular contact or ad hoc meetings with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, spokespersons and with NHS Redbridge, local NHS Trusts (i.e. Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust, the North East London Foundation Trust, Whipps Cross University Hospital Trust and the Outer North East London Community Services) and the Redbridge LINK.

In December 2009, the Committee approved a Health Communication Protocol developed in consultation with the above partner organisations, which formalises existing relationships and ensures their input into the Committee work programme.

**Joint scrutiny work with other Boroughs**, participation in one joint scrutiny review:

- **Outer North East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ONEL JHOSC)**—representing residents of London Boroughs of Redbridge, Havering, Barking & Dagenham and Waltham Forest, Essex County Council and Epping Forest District Council. This JHOSC has been operational since 2007 having been set up to respond to proposals to reconfigure local health services. Members and officers have developed good working relationships and the JHOSC has become a standing Committee with a remit to review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services that affect two or more boroughs. The main focus this year has been to undertake a **review of NHS proposals to reconfigure local health services** (i.e. the ‘Health4NEL’ consultation).
**Light touch scrutiny**, of items such as:

- **NHS Complaints**
- **Report from Outer North East Community Service** (a newly-established NHS provider organisation)
- **Redbridge LINK Annual Report**
- **Care Quality Commission Mid-year Reviews** (i.e. performance of NHS organisations)
- **NHS Redbridge Annual Public Health Report**
- **NHS Redbridge Estates Strategy**, including report on the development of polyclinics. The Loxford Polyclinic was opened in June 2009 and visits were made by representatives from the Health Scrutiny Committee, the ONEL JHOSC and the London Borough of Ealing
- **Tuberculosis**
- **Diabetes**
- **Pandemic and Swine Flu**

The Committee has also monitored progress on the implementation of recommendations from the Life Expectancy Working Group.

**Key successes in 2009/10**

- 16 out of 18 recommendations from the Life Expectancy Review were accepted by Cabinet / NHS Redbridge
- Health Communication Protocol developed with partner organisations
- Involvement of 4 co-opted members including a GP and a representative from the Local Involvement Network
- North East London Member development session on NHS Commissioning
- In-depth review of Homelessness and Health
- Reporting to the Secretary of State on proposals to configure local NHS services which has resulted in a referral to an Independent Review Panel
- Increased public participation at scrutiny meetings. Partnership working between Scrutiny and public representatives at one meeting led to plans to close the BHRT nuclear medicine service being halted

*Pictured: Cllr Ralph Scott and Linda Finch (NHSR) at the Polyclinic’s paediatric outpatient clinic*
Leisure Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Leisure. Leisure and Culture services are important key elements that improve the quality of life and opportunity for our community, adding to, supporting and developing the Borough's social capital.

As in other years, this Committee has had a lot of interest and passionate participation from the public. The Olympic and Para-Olympic Games will take place on our doorstep in two years’ time, and this offers a once in a lifetime opportunity for the Borough to gain from the Games and foster involvement.

The Working Group for 2009/10 looked in depth at **facilities in Redbridge’s Parks:**

- Parks and Open Spaces play a crucial cultural and environmental role in Redbridge. They improve community cohesion and the health and well being of residents in the Borough. Not only can parks contribute to the aesthetic quality of the Borough but they also enrich and improve the quality of life of individuals and local communities.

- The Working Group visited 4 parks in the Borough and heard from numerous park user group representatives. As well as this, over 500 residents filled out a questionnaire about their views on the parks in Redbridge and their facilities and the analysis on this consultation informed the final report. The recommendations covered issues such as improving toilets and catering in parks and the creation of a Borough-wide Park User’s forum which will work in partnership with the Council to share best practice and work on park conservation, maintenance and development for the benefit of the whole community.

The Committee looked a number of light touch issues over the year, they included:

- **The continued work to build a much needed new swimming pool and library in the Borough** - an update was given by officers about the progress and development of a new swimming pool and library at each meeting of the Leisure Scrutiny Committee. A potential site has been selected for the new Seven Kings library and the Community Steering Group is continuing to meet to discuss the development of this temporary library.

- **Library Service Improvement Plan** – the Committee scrutinised the plan to modernise libraries in the Borough and the new vision and aims of the Service to encourage residents to increase their library use. The Members of the Committee made a number of suggestions, which were included in the final plan.

- **Council’s 2009/10 revenue and capital budgets** - the Committee scrutinised and commented on draft Council budget proposals in January 2010.
• **Vision** - continued monitoring of the progress of Vision, the Charitable Trust that provides Leisure Services on behalf Borough at the following facilities:
  o Fullwell Cross Leisure Centre
  o Cricklefields Athletic Ground
  o Ashton Playing Fields
  o Fairlop Waters
  o Redbridge Cycling Centre

• **Fairlop Waters** – the Committee continued to receive updates on the redevelopment of the Fairlop Waters site.

The Committee also monitored progress on the implementation of recommendations from the Young People and Sport Working Group, which met during 2007/8.

### Key successes in 2009/10

- Heard evidence from Park User Groups, other London Boroughs and service officers on the issue of facilities in parks
- Engagement with over 500 residents including a significant number of school children on the Facilities in Parks Working Group
- The Committee has continued to be updated on the progress of the building of a new pool and library in the Borough and the current establishment of a temporary library in Seven Kings
- Commented on and inputted into the Borough’s Library Development Plan
Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Both planning and regeneration deliver a lasting impact on how the Borough looks, feels and works – and both elements help to define a place. This is not only important to our communities now, but will have an impact on generations of residents to come.

The Working Group for 2009/10 was:

**Redbridge Local Development Framework** which examined the Council’s progress in taking forward and augmenting the folder of local development documents that outlines how planning will be managed and, accordingly, how it will shape the Borough. In particular the Working Group sought to consider and make recommendations in respect of the following policy documents:

- Ilford Town Centre Area Action Plan
- Crossrail Corridor Area Action Plan
- Waste Development Plan Document
- Minerals Development Plan Document

The Committee undertook light touch scrutiny of a number of items, including:

- *Employment Skills and the Recession* – provided an update on the endeavours of the voluntary, public and private sectors in promoting skills for employment, and opportunities for promoting employment and training. The Committee also considered:
  - The local impact of the recession
  - The Council’s role in combating the recession
  - Cabinet’s proposals to support local businesses
  - The role of partner organisations – including Enterprise REDBRIDGE, Job Centreplus, Redbridge College and the Learning and Skills Council on their roles, and lessons learnt

- *Barkingside Town Centre Improvement Plan* – considered the draft plan following public consultation, prior to consideration by Cabinet – the Committee took the opportunity to hear and consider the views of local community and business groups – with 60 people attending the December 2009 scrutiny committee meeting

- *E.planning* – provided an update on the progress made implementing the e.planning agenda, and outlined the current situation, and future opportunities

- *Heathrow* – considered the potential impacts of the airport’s expansion on Redbridge – the Committee welcomed the proposed expansion, indicating that it would benefit Redbridge residents after 2017 when Crossrail would decrease travelling time to Heathrow Airport and increase employment opportunities for the residents
• **Community Infrastructure Plan** - appraised committee of the new community infrastructure levy, and sought views on the draft community infrastructure plan, which identifies the community infrastructure needed in Redbridge over the next 10 years, and provides the basis for Section 106 negotiations

• **Council’s 2009/10 revenue and capital budgets** - the Committee scrutinised and commented on draft Council budget proposals in February 2010

• **Permitted development and outbuildings** - considered and assessed the effect of implemented permitted development rights on gardens

Members of the Committee undertook two **visits** during the year:

• Members visited some of the Borough’s town centres, to view opportunities in the town centres on the Crossrail route, and consider issues affecting South Woodford.

• A visit to Newhall, a new suburb in Harlow, which showcased dwellings built to higher density and to design guidelines.

The Committee also held an extraordinary meeting in July to review the status of the Unity Square regeneration project following the withdrawal of the preferred developer. We sought to assess the implications and identify lessons learned by taking a critical look at why the development did not proceed. We considered options and opportunities for the future, and stressed the need for a united approach to the regeneration of our town centre.

**Key successes in 2009/10**

• Significant contribution to the developing Local Development Framework

• Public involvement in the December 2009 meeting, held in Barkingside with 60 members of the public attending

• A successful programme of visits conducted throughout the year
Resources and Finance Scrutiny Committee

This Committee scrutinises three Cabinet portfolios: the Leader’s, Resources and Finance. During the year the Committee supported the Council’s drive for improved efficiency and value for money, particularly in its support services.

The Working Group was Cost Effective Communications, which investigated spending on external communications. Evidence was received from Westminster Council’s Head of Communications and from an expert on social networking. The Group looked at all types of communications, including Redbridge Life and Redbridge i, and best-practice examples of publications and websites from other Boroughs. In order to assess the effectiveness of communications and to gauge what is and is not working, the Working Group commissioned an independent professional residents survey on communications in Redbridge.

The final recommendations focus on implementation of a more strategic approach to communications and methods to enforce more evaluation of communications. The Working Group also recommended an increase in the use of social media, directing residents to use on-line facilities while maintaining the more traditional forms of communication.

Scrutinising the Council budget 2010/11 to 2012/13

The Committee reviewed the budget proposals for 2010/11 in detail for the three relevant portfolios. As part of its wider responsibility of scrutinising the Finance portfolio, the Committee also this year started taking regular reports on the overall financial position of the Council’s revenue and capital budgets, with a particular focus on ensuring that the commitment to freeze Council Tax next year is delivered.

On the detail of the budget, we expressed concern about the implications for Area Committees of the proposal to withdraw Highways Officer support, and suggested there should be a corporate budget to fund Area Committee Lead Officers given the workload they carry, and the significant value to the Council of the Area Committees in involving and engaging local people.

Light touch scrutiny included:

- Cabinet Members’ work programmes for 2009/10 and regular question session – the three Cabinet Members attended to discuss matters falling within their portfolios and provided briefing notes
Leader’s Portfolio

- **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010/2011 – 2012/13** (a framework for how the Authority plans and manages its resources to enable effective delivery of its key plans and strategies) – reviewed the Strategy
- **Redbridge Strategic Partnership Community Engagement Strategy** – commented on the draft strategy setting out objectives and priorities for community engagement and information sharing across the Partnership
- **Council funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector** - produced a report which will guide local groups in identifying appropriate sources of funding
- **Draft Community Cohesion Strategy**

Resources Portfolio

- **Early Retirements Monitoring Report**
- **Local Government Pension Scheme – Early Retirement and Discretionary Compensation Policies** - we reviewed the policies and recommended some options to reduce costs to General Purposes Committee
- **Honoraria Payments**
- **Developing the Corporate Landlord Role**
- **Local Government Ombudsman – Annual Review** – recommended a process for reporting maladministration

Finance Portfolio

- **Risk Management Strategy (managing business risks)** – commented to Cabinet on the revised Policy and Strategy
- **Treasury Management** - received a briefing from officers and Butlers (Treasury Management consultants) about local authority investment. Due to the high profile of treasury management and with an increased awareness of the risks involved, the Committee reviewed the Council’s borrowing and investment position at each meeting.
- **Financial Performance Monitoring**
- **Performance against relevant indicators**

The Committee also monitored implementation of its recommendations from last year’s Working Groups, which were “Ways of Working” and “Online Transactions”.

Relevant Conferences/visits attended were the Olympic Building site visit and the Institute of Revenue Ratings and Valuation Conference.

Key successes in 2009/10

- Reviewed key Council strategies and commented to Cabinet
- Effective review of how the Council communicates with its residents
- Scrutiny of the budget proposals for 2010/11 in relation to the three relevant Cabinet portfolios
- Scrutiny of the overall Council Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, and regular review of the Council’s Treasury Management
Public involvement in scrutiny

Scrutiny at Redbridge has welcomed members of the public getting involved through making suggestions for scrutiny topics, attending meetings, submitting written evidence and appearing as witnesses - twelve issues identified through Redbridge-i in 2008/9 were taken forward into the long lists for possible consideration in 2009/10, and we hope to build on this during 2010/11. Improved and increased public involvement in the scrutiny process is an important measure of its growing success in Redbridge this year. This has been helped by holding some public events outside the Town Hall and its committee rooms and by some good coverage in the local press of Scrutiny Committees’ work.

Greater public involvement has been achieved - for example in 2009, 600 young people responded to a scrutiny survey on sport; 148 young people responded to a scrutiny survey on music and drama; 166 transport service users gave their views on Redbridge Transport; and 60 members of the public took part in a scrutiny meeting on Barkingside Town Centre plans in a local school.

As well as helping to shape our services to better meet the needs of Redbridge residents, public involvement in scrutiny enables people to acquire a greater understanding of how local government works and what can and cannot be reasonably achieved. It can also help to rebuild public confidence in local government as a democratic institution and in local Councillors as elected representatives.

Key successes in 2009/10

- Twelve issues identified through Redbridge-i in 2008/09 were taken forward into the long lists for possible consideration in 2009/10
- 4 co-opted members, including a GP and a representative from the Local Involvement Network, sat on the Health Scrutiny Committee
- The Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in December 2009 was held in Barkingside, and 60 members of the public attended and participated
- The Dementia Strategy Working Group hosted a stall at the World Mental Health day event to hear the views of people using dementia services and to promote scrutiny
- The Transport Service Working Group ran a half-day evidence gathering session with partners and service users, which was informed by 160 completed service user questionnaires
- The Facilities in Parks Scrutiny Working Group received over 600 completed questionnaires
- The Communications Working Group commissioned an independent professional survey on cost-effective communication channels in Redbridge
- Young people’s attitudes to and interest in music and drama were tested by a survey in schools and youth forums, resulting in 148 returns
Next Steps

This annual report highlights the big steps that the Council has taken to achieving effective scrutiny, through developing the process of scrutiny and the Scrutiny Team, a designated resource to support our scrutiny committees.

However, we want to build on these successes during the forthcoming year, to ensure that scrutiny continues to recommend improvements to public services, in order that we all see real difference in the provision of these services. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 have widened our remit to cover all public services in Redbridge. This new widened role will provide new challenges, as well as significant opportunities, for scrutiny during 2010/11.

Accordingly a new structure for scrutiny will see the eight Scrutiny Committees replaced by an Overview Committee, and four Scrutiny Committees. The Overview Committee will play a greater role in policy development, as well as being responsible for co-ordinating scrutiny across the Council; this will be supported by four further Scrutiny Committees (Children’s Services and Leisure; Housing and Social Services; Environment and Community Safety; and Health). The new structure will ensure that scrutiny continues to support the improvement of public services in the Borough.

Within this new structure, we will be seeking greater public participation in the scrutiny process, and we recognise the potential for using the groundbreaking Redbridge-i to better inform, engage and involve the community. In addition, the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 brought in a new duty on Councils to respond to petitions – with Scrutiny Committees given a specific role in hearing reviews on petition handling, and hearing petitions that call for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. This duty came into force on 1st April 2010, and presents an avenue for increased public involvement with scrutiny, and a new challenge in fairly scrutinising Council policies and practices.

We want to raise awareness among Councillors of the many different facets of scrutiny in Redbridge – this will be achieved through continuing regular scrutiny members meetings, member development and our scrutiny newsletter.

2010/11 will be another busy year for scrutiny in Redbridge, with Committees already beginning to plan and develop their work programmes, and looking forward to adding value where possible to the Council’s decision making process.
How can members of the public be involved?

You can:
- Attend a Scrutiny Committee meeting
- Suggest a topic for a scrutiny review
- Give evidence to a panel or send us your views about any of the reviews being undertaken

How to get in touch with the Scrutiny Team

We would welcome your comments on this report. You might also feel able to help with some of the work we are doing, or suggest a topic for a future inquiry.

✉️ Email: scrutiny@redbridge.gov.uk
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Further information about scrutiny in Redbridge can be found at: