

HARROW BUSINESS CONSULTATIVE PANEL MINUTES

22 JANUARY 2018

Chair: * Councillor Aneka Shah-Levy

Councillors: * Ajay Maru * Bharat Thakker
* Norman Stevenson

* Denotes Member present

20. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

21. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 8 - Draft Revenue Budget 2018/19 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21 & Draft Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2020/21

Councillor Ajay Maru declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he owned a business in Harrow. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 8 - Draft Revenue Budget 2018/19 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21 & Draft Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2020/21

Councillor Norman Stevenson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he owned a business outside the borough and two of his staff lived in Harrow. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

22. Appointment of Vice Chair

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ajay Maru be appointed Vice Chair of the Forum for the 2017/18 Municipal Year.

23. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2017 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

24. Public Questions, Petitions & Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that none were received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

25. Draft Revenue Budget 2018/19 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21 & Draft Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2020/21

The Panel received a report of the Director of Finance which set out the draft revenue budget for 2018/19 and draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2018/19 to 2020/21 and a second report which set out the new draft General Fund capital programmes which had been proposed as part of the 2018/19 budget process and also set out budgets within the existing Capital Programme which had been amended/reduced between 2017/18 and 2019/20.

The Director gave a presentation regarding the reports. Following questions from Members of the Panel, the Director of Finance advised that:

Since 2013/14, the Council had had to manage significant reductions in its Revenue Support Grant (RSG). Currently Local Authorities retained 30% of the Business Rates income they collected, for Harrow this equated to £15m per annum. Business Rates were subject to reform with central government intending to allow local government, as a whole, to retain all its rates collected. Alongside this there would be a phasing out of a number of specific grants including RSG and the transfer of additional responsibilities to local government to ensure overall fiscal neutrality of the reforms. The retained Business Rates income had remained at between £14m/£15m pa over the last few years and officers were not predicting a fall but rather were anticipating a slight increase. In April 2018 the government would give an indication of what Harrow's estimated growth would be. However, this would not be built into the budget and would be treated as a cash windfall.

A Member commented on the low rate of participation in the meeting by business representatives. He asked whether the event had been publicised to Harrow businesses and what incentives there were for businesses to start-up in Harrow. Officers advised that the event had been widely publicised to local business representatives, and that businesses had just occupied the Committee Room to attend a business event, but had chosen not to stay for

this meeting. The Officer proposed that the following year, the Forum could be held earlier and be sandwiched between two business support events (which were usually well attended).

The officer added that Harrow was attractive to businesses for a number of reasons as it had a highly skilled workforce, thriving town and district centres, good infrastructure and good transport links in place. Harrow also had one of the highest new business start-up and business survival rates in the country. Officers regularly facilitated business networking events and business to business mentoring schemes, which were both well attended and popular.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.07 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANEKA SHAH-LEVY
Chair