
REPORT OF CABINET

MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2003

Chair: * Councillor Foulds

Councillors: * D Ashton * C Mote
 * Burchell * O'Dell
 * Margaret Davine * N Shah
 * Dighé Stephenson
 † Miss Lyne

* Denotes Member present
 † Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL
RECOMMENDATION I – Key Decision - Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2003/04
 (See Minute 279)

Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive concerning the Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04 which sought approval for the publication of the draft Plan. In making their recommendation to Council, Cabinet also considered the contents of the draft Plan, including pages that had subsequently been updated. In agreeing to the publication of the Plan, subject to various amendments, Cabinet noted that the Plan would be published by 30 June 2003 as required by the Local Government Act 1999 and that it would be examined by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and formally adopted by Council in the Autumn. Cabinet also noted that the Plan formed part of the Council's statutory policy framework and set out the Council's proposals for improvement measures and, as such, touched upon all the Corporate Priorities of Harrow.

Cabinet further noted that the Plan for 2003/04 differed from previous BVPP in terms of both text and data in that it now encompassed the revised statutory and non-statutory guidance about Best Value issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in March 2003.

Cabinet was informed that the Plan before them was a working draft, in that some of the text was being updated and that numerical data was being checked to ensure that the performance indicators are not qualified.

Cabinet agreed the Draft Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04, subject to a number of amendments, and noted that full and final version of the Plan would be submitted to Council on 23 October 2003 for adoption.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

That the London Borough of Harrow Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04 be adopted.

Reason for Recommendation: To achieve adoption in accordance with statutory requirements.

PART II - MINUTES
272. Declarations of Interest:

RESOLVED: To note that no interests were declared.

273. Minutes:

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

274. Arrangement of Agenda:

Cabinet noted that Councillor Lyne had submitted her apologies as she was recuperating following an operation. The Chair, on behalf of Cabinet, wished her a speedy recovery. Councillor Thornton was present at the meeting in a monitoring capacity.

The Chair indicated that he was prepared to consider the following addendum as urgent on the grounds set out in the third supplemental agenda:-

11. East End Farm Conservation Area: Addendum to the report of the Chief Planning Officer.

RESOLVED: That all business be considered with the press and public present.

275. **Petitions:**
Councillor Chris Mote presented a petition that had been received by Councillor Anjana Patel from residents of Beechcroft Avenue, Oakington Avenue and Elm Grove complaining mainly about the noise pollution created by the air handling units/chillers situated at roof level to the rear of Imperial House. Councillor Chris Mote summarised the terms of the petition at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the petition be referred to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport for consideration.

276. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions had been received.

277. **Forward Plan 1 June 2003 - 30 September 2003:**

RESOLVED: To note the contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 June 2003 – 30 September 2003.

278. **Reference from the Strengthening Communities Sub-Committee held on 3 February 2003 - Domestic Violence:**

Members considered a reference from the Strengthening Communities Sub-Committee in relation to the appointment of a permanent Domestic Violence Officer and the approval and implementation locally of the Association of London Government's Minimum Standards.

The Chief Executive assured Members that the work of the former Domestic Violence Officer was continuing and that it was being covered by another officer of the Council.

She added that a sum of £20k had been identified in the budget, which meant that funding for the post was now available for the remainder of the current financial year 2003/04 and not only until June 2003 as reported in the reference from the Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee. She mentioned that a letter would be sent to Members confirming this.

She clarified that in order to establish this post permanently and beyond March 2004, a growth bid would be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

A Member stated that he was pleased to see that funding had been identified for the post, which he considered to be an asset to the Borough. He spoke in support of the post being established on a permanent basis.

A Member stated that she too was pleased to learn that the important work of the previous post-holder was continuing. She highlighted the importance of this key post, particularly in building capacity and awareness of domestic violence. She added that the previous post-holder had also played an important role in developing the ALG Minimum Standards and recommended that these be implemented locally.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Association of London Government's Minimum Standards on Domestic Violence be approved and implemented locally;

(2) that it be noted that the post of a full-time Domestic Violence Officer would be funded on a permanent basis.

Reasons for Decision: To meet the commitment to implement the Minimum Standards made at the ALG Leaders' Committee.

To continue effective partnership working in domestic violence.

279. **Key Decision - Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2003/4:**
(See Recommendation I)

Cabinet considered the report by the Chief Executive together with the draft Plan including those pages that had subsequently been updated. Cabinet having made a recommendation to Council that the BVPP be adopted in accordance with statutory requirements suggested that the following amendments be incorporated:-

Foreword by the Leader of the Council – page 3, paragraph 3, last sentence to be amended

About Harrow – page 4, to include the level of unemployment and the education levels attained in the borough

Performance Management Framework – page 6, individual workers' priorities to be given prominence in the model, if practical

The New Harrow Project – page 8, distinguish the New Harrow Project from the South Harrow pilot (Delineation of paragraphs 2 and 3 was necessary).

Cabinet also commented that it would be useful to identify the personnel within the service areas and Members who were responsible for various aspects of the Plan but noted that this level of detail was normally provided in individual service plans.

Cabinet requested that any substantial changes to the Plan should be tracked and agreed with the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the main political parties and the Portfolio Holders.

RESOLVED: (1) That the draft Best Value Performance Plan be approved for publication, subject to the inclusion of the updated pages and the amendments set out in the preamble above;

(2) that the Plan be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for examination.

Reason for Decision: To achieve publication in accordance with statutory requirements.

280.

Key Decision - Transportation Spending Plan 2004/5 - 2006/7:

Cabinet considered a report by the Acting Director of Environmental Services seeking agreement of the Transportation Spending Plan 2004/05 – 2006/07 and its submission to Transport for London (TfL).

Cabinet considered the report in conjunction with the recommendations from the Council's Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel (TARSAP) and was informed that the guidance from TfL was received following consideration of the report by TARSAP. The Acting Director of Environmental Services added that as a result some revisions had been made to the Plan.

In response to questions from Members, the Acting Director of Environmental Services responded as follows:-

- training on road safety was still being provided in schools. However, a bid encompassing training on road safety in order to help reduce accidents and increase road safety awareness was being worked on for submission to TfL
- that should there be any overrun of costs in respect of the Petts Hill Bridge improvements, the Council would have the opportunity to seek the costs from TfL. However, payment of any additional costs would depend on the merits of the case. The Acting Director of Environmental Services assured Cabinet that additional design and feasibility work would be carried out at subsequent stages to identify potential cost over new and consider ways of dealing with them.

The Chair was of the view that a new bridge would be of benefit to Harrow and added that he was pleased to see the inclusion of a third option scheme. He hoped that TfL would be receptive to this third option.

A Member also spoke in favour of the third option scheme as a way forward. He was of the view that the larger scheme was unlikely to be approved for funding by TfL because of the high costs involved.

RESOLVED: (1) That the submission of the Transport Spending Plan 2004/05 – 2006/07 to the Transport for London be based on the programme recommended by the Council's Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel at its meeting on 10 March 2003, as amended by the recommended changes in Section 6 of the main report of the Acting Director of Environmental Services;

(2) that the third option, as described in paragraph 6.11 of the report, be included for Petts Hill Bridge Improvement;

(3) that the Acting Director of Environmental Services be authorised to agree any further significant changes with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport.

Reason for decision: To enable the submission of the Transport Spending Plan – a funding-bid document – to reflect not just the Mayor of London's priorities but also those of the Council, and to submit it to Transport for London by the deadline of 1 August 2003.

281. **New Economic Regeneration Strategy:**

Cabinet considered a report by the Acting Director of Environmental Services on the New Economic Regeneration Strategy titled 'Developing a Better Life for Harrow 2003-2010'.

Cabinet noted that the new Strategy was developed to reflect the change in focus from regeneration to both regeneration and economic development where working proactively with the Council's partners to maximise economic opportunity was considered to be important.

Cabinet also noted that the Strategy looked seven years ahead whereas previous such Strategies had only looked three years ahead.

In response to a question from a Member, the Acting Director of Environmental Services undertook to provide details of the cross party group of Members that had been involved in early consultation on the Strategy in January 2003.

RESOLVED: That the new Economic Regeneration Strategy be approved.

Reason for Decision: To promote the economic, environmental and social well-being of the Borough.

282. **East End Farm Conservation Area - Conservation Area Study:**

Cabinet considered a report on the East End Farm Conservation Area together with an addendum setting out the amendment to the draft Strategy following public consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Conservation Area Study for East End Farm Conservation Area be approved subject to the inclusion of the changes set out in the addendum.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that the Study, which as a draft was subject to public consultation in accordance with Government Guidance, acquires the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance.

283. **Provisional Outturn 2002/3 - Revenue Budget:** (To Follow)

The Executive Director (Business Connections) introduced the report and highlighted the following:-

- that the report informed Cabinet of the provisional revenue outturn and that changes may occur between the provisional outturn and production of the final accounts
- the efforts made by all managers towards achieving an under-spend
- that the carry forward of under-spends from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004 being recommended for approval are those that have previously been approved by Cabinet
- that specific earmarked reserves are set out in paragraph 6.12 of the report and that he would be recommending, in due course, that £500k for 'Change Management', agreed by Council, be included in that category subject to the level of unearmarked reserves in the final accounts.

A Member enquired if the increase in the reserves held by the Council would be used to meet current funding issues related to school budgets.

The Chair and the Portfolio Holders for Education and Lifelong Learning and Finance, Human Resources and Performance Management responded as follows:

- that whilst discussions with head teachers were ongoing, the situation this year, although very serious, was not considered to lead to critical service failure and there were unlikely to be any redundancies in the current financial year
- that the implications for future years will be examined
- that, to-date, only one school had required a licensed deficit budget
- that regular briefings were taking place, that the situation would be monitored and that any problems would be reported back

- that it was not intended to earmark any reserves for schools at this stage
- that any suggestions for future years was dependent on matters such as the funding formulae agreed by the Government.

In summing up, the Chair stated that the report should be welcomed and that the increase in the reserves held by the Council was an excellent start to achieving an eventual target figure of £7m. He assured Members that funding of front line services such as schools was of paramount importance and that the Council was committed to protecting Education. He added that any problems experienced by schools in their budgets would be seriously considered.

RESOLVED: (1) To receive the revenue outturn report for 2002-2003;

(2) that the decision to charge to capital £1.543m of expenditure, as set out in paragraph 6.7 of the Interim Director of Finance's report, be approved;

(3) that the level of bad debt provision, as detailed in paragraph 6.8 of the Interim Director of Finance's report, be approved;

(4) that the level of insurance provisions, as set out in paragraph 6.9 of the Interim Director of Finance's report, be approved;

(5) that the carry forward of budgets from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004, as detailed in paragraph 6.11 of the report, be approved;

(6) that the level of reserves, earmarked in paragraph 6.12 of the report, be approved.

Reason for Decision: To enable early consideration of the provisional accounts for 2002-2003.

284.

Capital Investment Outturn 2002-03:

In introducing his report, the Executive Director (Business Connections) highlighted the following:-

- that the column labelled 'Rephasing' in Table 1 shows a combination of both slippage and budgeted spend in future years and that his service was developing a split so as to show them as separate items in order to clarify capital funds available in each financial year
- that Appendix 2 sets out the new Capital schemes.

In response to questions from Members, the Executive Director (Business Connections) stated that:-

- the accrual of capital receipts from Right to Buy sales beyond 2003-04 might be an issue that the Council would have to address in its medium term plans. However, the figure assumed for 2003-04 was prudent given the number of applications waiting to be processed.
- that out of the £6m of capital receipts generated by Right to Buy sales in 2003-03, £1.5m were usable to support additional capital expenditure. The remainder had to be 'reserved' according to capital guidelines. He agreed to report back on the overall total of 'reserved' receipts and how much of those receipts were held as cash by the authority.

The Council's Interim Director of Finance added that the Council did use some 'reserved' receipts to fund new capital expenditure in lieu of borrowing as borrowing on the open market was expensive.

RESOLVED: (1) That the level of expenditure on approved capital investment plans at the end of 2002-03 be noted;

(2) that the forecast level of expenditure for 2003-04 and future years and the position of current resources be noted;

(3) that the new schemes outlined in Appendix 2 of the Interim Director of Finance's report be added to the Capital Programme.

Reason for Decision: To inform Cabinet of the expenditure on capital schemes in 2002-03.

285.

Procurement Issues:

Cabinet considered a report from the Executive Director (Business Connections) on the procurement issues facing the Council and the seeking of delegated powers to enter into contracts and procurement consortia where these provide value for money and are in the best interests of the Council.

In addition, the report sought approval of the extension of the existing Street Lighting and Highways Maintenance Contract beyond March 2004.

The Executive Director (Business Connections) stated that the report was linked to the Council's Medium Term Budget Strategy, that there were savings to be achieved from procurement and that, should Cabinet be minded to agree the recommendations, the Council would benefit both in financial and non-financial terms.

In response to a question from a Member, the Borough Solicitor stated that in the spirit of openness and transparency, which was consistent with Council policy, the report had been made public but that should Members wish to ask pertinent questions, Cabinet could resolve to move into confidential session.

In response to a question from a Member about the Street Lighting Contract and whether the Council was getting value for money, the Acting Director of Environmental Services pointed out that the problem of getting repairs done in time was not always as a result of delay by the contractor but that it was often down to getting the supply connected from the Electricity Board, especially where this involved new fittings.

However, he added that this did not in any way negate the need for improvements to be made to the existing contract and that officers would continue to monitor the contract and seek improvements.

A Member proposed that recommendations 2.3 and 2.4 should be amended and that the Portfolio Holders should not merely be consulted but that officers should seek their agreement. Cabinet questioned the effect of such a change. The Borough Solicitor stated that for the purposes of good government, the lines of accountability of Members and Officers should be clear and he stated that a letter would be sent to Members of Cabinet to explain the issues involved and the effect of various options.

Following further discussion on the Street Lighting Contract it was

RESOLVED: (1) That the Executive Director (Business Connections) be authorised to enter into a preferred supplier contract with Pertemps Recruitment Partnership Limited;

(2) that subject to any overriding requirement of the service that prevent so doing, Chief Officers be authorised to use the preferred supplier corporate contract to satisfy their temporary agency requirements;

(3) that on the proviso that any corporate contract does not commit any division to a minimum or maximum spend, the approval of corporate contracts be through the Executive Director (Business Connections) following consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders and the Legal Services;

(4) that the Executive Director (Business Connections) be authorised to enter the Council into any purchasing consortia that provides value for money and is in the best interests of the Council, following consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders and Legal Services;

(5) that the existing contracts for Street Lighting and Highway Maintenance due to end in March 2004 be extended by three months.

Reason for Decision: In order to commence the preferred supplier contracts for temporary administrative staff and to streamline future procurement decisions.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.42 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR A T FOULDS
Chair