

## PUBLICATIONS ADVISORY PANEL

23 MAY 2005

Chair: \* Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan

Councillors: \* Branch \* Seymour (3)  
\* Janet Cowan (2) \* Bill Stephenson  
\* Harrison

\* Denotes Member present  
(2) and (3) Denote category of Reserve Member

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**198. **Appointment of Chair:**

**RESOLVED:** To note the appointment, at the Cabinet meeting on 19 May 2005, of Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan as Chair of the Panel for the 2005/2006 Municipal Year.

199. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

**RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary MemberReserve Member

Councillor Jean Lammiman  
Councillor Knowles

Councillor Janet Cowan  
Councillor Seymour

200. **Declarations of Interest:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

201. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

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

202. **Appointment of Vice-Chair:**

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Councillor Jean Lammiman as Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2005/2006 Municipal Year.

203. **Minutes:**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

204. **Public Questions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

205. **Petitions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

206. **Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

207. **Website Update:**

The Panel received a demonstration and verbal report on the progress made in updating Harrow Council's Website.

The Panel was introduced to the item with some statistics about the website. In a survey of 462 public sector websites, it was reported that Harrow's website had been ranked in the middle. The survey rated sites according to their layout, navigation, accessibility, search functions and interactivity. The Panel was also presented with detailed statistics relating to the Council's website, outlining the most frequented pages on the site, the top search terms used by browsers, the daily number of visits and the duration of visits. Officers informed the Panel that they wanted the interactive features on the site, such as online forms, to become more frequently used, as these features empowered individuals to resolve their issues at a minimum inconvenience.

Members commented that it would be useful to have infrequent browsers trial the system, to assess its usability. The Panel discussed Brent Council's website, which used Google as its search engine. Officers informed the Panel that the search function on Harrow's website was being reviewed.

Officers outlined the new features that had been incorporated into Harrow's website:

- **Online forms** – the Panel was informed that a wide range of interactive 'e-forms' had been activated on the website since January 2005. In response to questions from Members, officers reported that the forms were working well. Members suggested ways of publicising the online forms, such as placing notices in public libraries, the press, Harrow People and in organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau.
- **Online events calendar** – officers demonstrated the online calendar, which advertised events in Harrow over the duration of a year. The page had only been activated recently, and Members asked that it be updated regularly.
- **Business Portal** – officers showed the Panel the Business Portal, which provided, amongst other things, a free registration site for businesses and pages advertising work put out to tender by the Council.
- **Public questions and answers** – a new section had been created on the site to display all public questions received by Council committees and the answers provided.
- **Tourism Portal** – the Panel was informed that a Tourism Portal would be launched to showcase Harrow to potential visitors.

Officers then demonstrated new designs for the Council's homepage that were in development. Features of the new designs included:

- redesigned layout to assist navigation around the site and improved design features;
- improved access to key features such as the portals and e-forms;
- grouped links to the most popular pages within the site;
- a page summarising all emergency contact numbers, which would be regularly maintained;
- new features such as a 'Virtual Tour' of the Civic Centre for new visitors, and a poll on topical issues.

The Chair commented that the redesign had taken account of the views expressed by Members at previous meetings of the Panel. In response to Members' requests that the new systems be trialled by users, officers reported that consultation was currently underway with all major stakeholders. Members suggested that any publicity for the new website should reference the e-forms available on the site.

Members expressed concern that the developments excluded those without access to computers. Officers agreed to provide statistics on Internet usage amongst groups perceived as being infrequent users.

Officers also raised the issue of a request from the Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Members to create online diaries, or 'Blogs', that would be linked to the main Council website. Following a short discussion, the Panel agreed that the request should be passed to all Members, for their consideration.

**RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.

208. **Harrow People - June Edition:**

The Panel had received a draft copy of the Summer Edition of Harrow People prior to the meeting, which included the draft feature pages for the issue and Area Newsletters to be incorporated within the publication.

The Panel discussed whether the publication should name individuals and individual businesses in articles such as 'Harrow restaurateur fined' and 'Film pirate sunk by illegal DVDs' on page 12 of the copy received. The Panel discussed whether it was fair to name a single person on a charge that could have similarly been committed by others, and the fact that there was a deterrent element in naming people. The Panel agreed by general assent that the references to individuals should be left in.

A Member of the Panel requested that the shops at Sudbury Hill be featured in a similar article to 'Wealdstone's treasures', on page 36 of the copy received.

It was agreed that a copy of the Leader's Column would be circulated to Members of the Panel when finalised.

The Panel suggested amendments to the text and design, which were noted by officers.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the amendments to the draft copy of the magazine be noted;

(2) it be agreed in principle to allow reference to individuals within the publication;

(3) the Leader's Column be circulated to Members when a final draft becomes available.

209. **Future of Harrow People and Area Newsletters:**

The Panel received a verbal report of the Group Manager, Communications that presented ideas for the future of the Harrow People magazine and the area newsletters contained within it. It was reported that at Cabinet on 17 March 2005, it had been resolved that the Harrow People magazine be a bi-monthly publication from June 2005.

The Panel was presented with a copy of the Brent Magazine, published monthly by the London Borough of Brent. Officers asked for Members' views on the publication, and indicated that the Communications Unit was interested in developing Harrow People further under similar lines.

Members commended the publication, paying particular attention to the job supplement, layout and use of adverts. It was agreed that the Harrow People should adopt some of the features of the Brent Magazine. Officers informed the Panel that the tenders for printing and distribution had been put out, and that the Procurement Unit were processing the figures.

**RESOLVED:** That the Harrow People adopt some of the features of the Brent Magazine.

210. **Corporate Plan:**

The Group Manager, Communications informed the Panel that he would not be able to present the Corporate Plan, as amendments were still being made to it.

The Panel was informed that two versions of the Corporate Plan were going to be released: a formal document containing the complete plan, and a summary document, in a style similar to the leaflet 'Your Council, Your Services' that had been presented at the last meeting of the Panel. Officers reported that this publication had received a favourable response from the public.

**RESOLVED:** That the documents relating to the Corporate Plan be presented to the Panel when they become available.

211. **Any Other Business:**

**Timetable for the Harrow People Magazine**

It was agreed that the timetable for the production of the Harrow People magazine would be circulated to both Members and Reserve Members of the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.

212. **Date of Next Meeting:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that the Panel's next meeting would be held on 27 September 2005.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.40 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARIE-LOUISE NOLAN  
Chair