



HARROW BUSINESS CONSULTATIVE PANEL

**THURSDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2007
7.30 PM**

PANEL AGENDA (ADVISORY)

**COMMITTEE ROOM 5
HARROW CIVIC CENTRE**

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 3)

Chairman: Councillor Manji Kara

Councillors:

Susan Hall

**Mrinal Choudhury (VC)
Keith Ferry**

Reserve Members:

1. Yogesh Teli
2. Mrs Vina Mithani
3. Mrs Myra Michael

1. Idaikkadar
2. Mrs Sasi Suresh
3. -

**Issued by the Democratic Services Section,
Legal Services Department**

**Contact: Kevin Unwin, Committee Administrator
Tel: 020 8424 1265 E-mail: kevin.unwin@harrow.gov.uk**

***NOTE FOR THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING:*
*IF YOU WISH TO DISPOSE OF THIS AGENDA, PLEASE LEAVE IT BEHIND AFTER THE MEETING.
IT WILL BE COLLECTED FOR RECYCLING.***

HARROW COUNCIL

HARROW BUSINESS CONSULTATIVE PANEL

THURSDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2007 AT 7.30 PM

COMMITTEE ROOMS 1 & 2, CIVIC CENTRE

AGENDA - PART I

1. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. **Declarations of Interest:**

To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Committee, Sub Committee, Panel or Forum;
- (b) all other Members present in any part of the room or chamber.

3. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

To consider whether any of the items listed on the agenda should be considered with the press and public excluded on the grounds that it is thought likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that there would be disclosure of confidential information in breach of an obligation of confidence or of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

4. **Minutes:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2006 be deferred until printed in the bound minute volume.

[Note: The 15 November 2006 minutes are published on the Council's intranet and website].

Enc. 5. **Matters Arising:** (Pages 1 - 2)

To note the matters arising from the last meeting of the Panel.

6. **Public Questions:**
To receive questions (if any) from local residents or organisations under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).
7. **Petitions:**
To receive petitions (if any) submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).
8. **Deputations:**
To receive deputations (if any) under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).
9. **Budget Proposals 2007/08:**
Presentation of the Group Manager – Corporate Finance.
- Enc. 10. **Business Rates 2007/08:** (Pages 3 - 12)
Presentation of the Group Manager – Revenues.
- Enc. 11. **The Business Consultative Panel:** (Pages 13 - 16)
Report of the Director of Planning Services.
12. **Business Incubator Update:**
Presentation of the Senior Professional – Strategic Planning
13. **Harrow Business Against Crime Update:**
Russell Barr, Business Crime Reduction Manager, Harrow Business Against Crime, will be in attendance for this item.
14. **Any Other Urgent Business:**
Which cannot otherwise be dealt with.

AGENDA - PART II - NIL

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Action Sheet HBCP 15 November 2006

Minute Number	Action Required	To be carried out by	Completion Date	Comments from the Chair
20	A representative of the Business Community presented bankruptcy figures for the Greater London Area, provided by Companies' House. It was reported that there had been an increase in creditor bankruptcies from 553 to 612 in 2005/2006, and an increase in debtor bankruptcies from 1,059 to 1567 in the same period. It was requested that a full set of this information be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.	Chander Vasdev		
25	In response to questions, it was stated that the second report had built upon the first, focusing on specific issues. The Panel heard that issues such as the type and nature of skills available in Harrow and the provision of courses were covered by the report. Members requested that details of the reports be circulated to them outside of the meeting.	Chander Vasdev		

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Business Rates in 2007/08

By Fern Silverio
Group Manager - Revenues

Proposed 2006/07 Multipliers

- **Standard 0.444p**
 - Increased in line with September 2006 RPI – a figure of 3.6%
- **Small Business 0.441p**
(0.426p)

SBR Detail

- In line with Local Government Act 2003, there are 2 multipliers:
 - The non domestic rating multiplier which includes the supplement to pay for the small business relief [supplement = 0.003p]
 - The small business non-domestic rating multiplier which is applicable to those that qualify for the small business relief

Small Business Rate Relief

- Approved by Parliament in 2004 giving the local authority the right to grant small business rate relief to eligible ratepayers from 1/4/2005
- So far in 2006/07 **803** small businesses have received relief worth in excess of **£486k**

Small Business Rate Relief

- Legislative changes in 2006 replaced the condition that ratepayers apply annually for relief.
- Instead, it requires an application to be made in respect of the 5 year period between revaluations of commercial property
- Businesses who apply this year will therefore not need to re-claim until 2010/11 so long as certain defined circumstances do not change.

Small Business Rate Relief

- The deadline for 2006/07 applications is 30 September 2007.

SBR Detail

- Relief is available at 50% for ratepayers occupying single properties with a rateable value up to £5,000, with relief declining in percentage terms on a sliding scale until it is 0% at £10,000.
- The relief is only available to ratepayers with either:
 - one property, or
 - one main property and other additional properties providing those additional properties have rateable values less than £2,200
- The rateable value of the property mentioned in (a), or the aggregate rateable value of all properties mentioned in (b), must be under £21,500 (or £15,000 outside London).

SBR Detail

- The scheme is funded through a supplement on the rates bills of those businesses not eligible for the relief. The supplement is built into the standard non-domestic rating multiplier. However, ratepayers of eligible business properties with rateable values between £10,000 and £21,500 (£15,000 outside London) do not have to contribute towards the relief and will have their bills calculated using the lower small business non-domestic rating multiplier.
- Ratepayers must apply for the relief each year and must be eligible on the 1st April of each year. If a ratepayer ceases to be eligible on a day during the year in question, the relief will cease on that day. An application for relief must be submitted in writing to the local authority within 6 months of the end of the financial year to which it relates.

Contact Details

- Should you wish further information please contact:
 - The Revenues office via tel. 0208 424 1670
 - Via email: ctax@harrow.gov.uk
 - Myself, Fern Silverio on tel 0208 736 6818

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5th Jan 2007



Cabinet/Committee:	Harrow Business Consultative Forum
Date of Circulation:	January 2007
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – Meeting Review
Responsible Officer:	Claire Codling Strategic Planning
Portfolio Holder:	Planning and Enterprise
Exempt:	Yes

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY

FOR INFORMATION

This report suggests that the Forum review the format of future meetings to increase the engagement of the business community.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

2.1 Background

Harrow Business Consultative Forum's first meeting was held in September 2005, following agreement by Cabinet of the terms of reference in May 2005 set out below.

1. To enable consultation between the Council and representatives of local non domestic ratepayers required by Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to provide information regarding the Council's expenditure proposals for the future budget in accordance with Non-Domestic Ratepayers

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(Consultation) Regulations 1992. The minutes of the meetings to be reported to the Cabinet.

2.To facilitate consultation between the Council and representatives of the business community as required by the Authority.

Despite the best endeavours of the co-ordinating officer to increase attendance at these meetings by sending out 400 invitations per meeting and providing a more varied agenda on topics that will either:

- impact on business operations e.g. Business Recovery
- or
- businesses can directly benefit from involvement in e.g. the Harrow Tourism Strategy

there has been very limited attendance at meetings apart from representatives from business intermediary organisations e.g. The NW London Chamber, Harrow in Business, the Small Business Federation and Wealdstone Traders.

The idea in extending the remit of the initial forum was to support the Best Value Review into Harrow's Economy. Although this has since been closed down, with agreement that scrutiny's role would cover this instead, many of the initiatives listed in the presentation made to the Forum in Sept 2005 by the Finance Director (enclosed as a background paper) would still benefit from greater consultation with businesses across Harrow e.g.

- Enforcement and regulatory services
- Crime Reduction
- Business rates
- Procurement and the Business Portal
- Master Planning the town centre
- Tourism

There are now also further initiatives who either need specific consultation or regular feedback from the business sector in order to ensure the service being developed is what is needed by the business community:-

- The development of a revised Economic Development Strategy focussing on Enterprise
- The possible development of a Business Improvement District in the Town Centre
- The development of incubator provision to help business start ups.

There is a further major driver behind improving engagement with businesses in that 'Building a better relationship with business' is one of the Conservative administration's election pledges, and is one of the themes being taken forward under the corporate priority – Getting Harrow Moving.

5th Jan 2007

Currently Harrow Council is operating under severely constrained financial circumstances and this is likely to continue for at least a further two years. It also needs to be acknowledged that apart from the statutory consultation meeting on NDDR, that business liaison is one of the few discretionary services, so that any changes to meetings will need to be carried out at nil cost to the Council.

Individual services within the council do in addition to the Business Consultative Forum hold separate specific events to promote their services/ new initiatives e.g. a private Landlords Forum and this will need to continue. However if the BCF was a larger group with a cross section of businesses regularly attending it could be used more fully as a mechanism for sounding out and getting feedback from businesses on services provided on a regular basis, and could save time and resources for both the Council and businesses.

There has already been some discussion as to how meetings might be further changed to increase interest from the business community, holding breakfast meetings, taking meetings to other venues, being an agenda item at an existing business meeting.

It perhaps also needs to be acknowledged that attending Harrow Council meetings maybe a rather low priority for many businesses who are heavily preoccupied with running their businesses. Therefore there is a need to look at harnessing other opportunities to gain feedback from the business community in their interaction with Harrow Council such as email registration when businesses use the web site and business portal.

It is proposed that, apart from the annual February NDDR consultation meeting that the format of meetings is changed and other alternative approaches are trialed e.g. 'a question time approach' with the Leader or events could be themed. The possibility of reworking, and reconvening, the annual business debate or local business awards, if sponsorship can be found and so to provide real networking opportunities for businesses in Harrow could also be looked into.

However any event must also be developed to provide opportunities for both feedback on existing services and initiatives and awareness raising of new initiatives and changes to regulations.

This paper is being tabled as an information item with the intention of encouraging members, and the businesses and the intermediaries present to discuss this with business networks and return to the next meeting to agree a plan for increasing business engagement with Harrow Council. Further ideas to be explored, should be emailed to ccodling@harrow.council.co.uk. By 28th February 2007. A draft action plan will then be drafted and circulated prior to the next meeting, with an accompanying report and recommendations.

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SECTION 3 – FURTHER INFORMATION

The Business Mapping research, March 2006, included not just contacting the small businesses in the area but also 17 of the 42 organisations employing more than 200. The survey used was based on one carried out in 2002. The results show a slight decline in satisfaction with Harrow from several of these larger businesses and organisations. It has already been agreed with the Leader and deputy leader that a small network should be set up to enable direct contact at Leader and CE level. It is expected that the first meeting of this group will be in March 2007.

Please note a formal consultation will be carried out separately on the new strategy, 'Enterprising Harrow' which will include the business community.

Please also note that a short review of the management and directorate structure is taking place, which may mean that co-ordination of the Harrow Business Consultative Forum may move to a different directorate from April 2007.

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Claire Codling, Senior Professional, Strategic Planning, Urban Living
0208 420 9399 Report Author's name, Job Title, direct telephone number

Background Papers:

Sept 2005 presentation by Finance Director to Harrow Business Consultative Forum