

PUBLICATIONS ADVISORY PANEL

25 JUNE 2007

Chairman: * Councillor Paul Osborn

Councillors: * Mrs Lurline Champagnie * Bill Stephenson (1)
 * Keith Ferry * Tom Weiss
 * Narinder Singh Mudhar

* Denotes Member present
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Harrow People**

The Panel received a report of the Head of Communications on the future of Harrow People magazine. The officer reported that the Harrow Strategic Partnership (HSP) Executive foresaw difficulties in producing a partnership magazine and did not wish to take this further. However, the current budget was sufficient to finance the production of three issues, one in September, one in November/December and one in the New Year.

Referring to resolutions made at the Panel meeting held on 22 March 2007, the officer regretted that it had not been possible to employ a sales representative, as the budget did not allow for it. Nor had it been possible to commission an in-depth business case in view of the Communications Team's restricted capacity. In the light of this, Members were reluctant to recommend that Harrow People be restarted until a business case had been made.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Strategy and Business Support Portfolio Holder)

That production of Harrow People cease until a business plan had been provided and approved.

Reason for Recommendation: To decide the future of Harrow People magazine.

(See also Minute 40).

PART II - MINUTES31. **Appointment of Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment at the meeting of Cabinet on 15 May 2007 of Councillor Paul Osborn as Chairman of the Publications Advisory Panel for the Municipal Year 2007/08.

32. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Archie Foulds

Councillor Bill Stephenson.

33. **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.

34. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda item be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

Agenda item

Special Circumstances / Grounds for Urgency

10. Harrow People

This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated, because consultation with partners,

which had to take place after the Harrow Strategic Partnership Executive meeting on 31 May 2007 could not be completed in time. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency.

(2) all items be considered with the press and public present;

(3) item 11 - Communications Review, be discussed before item 10 - Harrow People.

35. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Mrs Lurline Champagnie as Vice-Chairman of the Publications Advisory Panel for the 2007/2008 Municipal Year.

36. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2007 be deferred until printed in the Council Bound Minute Volume;

(2) the Chairman discuss with officers the best way of providing minutes and raising any matters arising.

37. **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 16 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

38. **Petitions:**

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

39. **Deputations:**

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

40. **Harrow People:**

Further to Recommendation 1, Members discussed the possibility of launching Harrow People as a newspaper, with 13 issues a year. It could then publish statutory notices and jobs advertisements. The officer agreed to provide information on how much the Council was spending on advertisements and notices and the cost of producing Harrow People in its current form.

A Member suggested that the relaunch of Harrow People would be an ideal project for the BBC television programme *The Apprentice*, for which the BBC was seeking ideas for the next series.

RESOLVED: That officers provide the Panel with information on the production cost of Harrow People and the amount being spent currently on statutory notices and other advertisements.

41. **Communications Review:**

The Director of People, Performance and Policy provided a verbal update on the Strategic Review of Communications presented to Cabinet on 15 May 2007. The officer took Members through the Westminster City Council Review of Harrow Council's Communications, answering Members' questions. Since the May Cabinet meeting the administration had been working on a new vision for the Council, one of the Review's recommendations, and this would be presented at the July Council meeting. Consultation was taking place with staff and Trades Unions. It was hoped to make swift progress, and a report to the July Cabinet meeting was planned.

Members raised the following concerns:

- the importance of the right balance of internal and external expertise to take the review forward;
- the wisdom of possibly allowing Westminster City Council to bid for any external work to implement the recommendations of the Review;

- the fact that the Review, while clearly a priority, was not a flagship action;
- Members' wish to see an agreed and detailed specification of requirements;
- the fact that the proposals to take the Review forward would go to Cabinet before the Panel saw them.

The Chairman informed Members that although the Communications Review was not a flagship action, it formed part of the Corporate Improvement Plan.

The officer reported that the need to bring in outside expertise was driven by the need to make rapid progress. The specification of requirements was still in draft. When finalised, the specification would be emailed to Members of the Panel before being presented to the July Cabinet meeting.

In response to Members' concerns about the need for a more rigorous enforcement culture, discipline and the winning over of the Directorates' trust in relation to the Council's dealings with the media, the Chairman agreed to ensure that these were reflected in the report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That (1) the verbal report and Members' comments be noted;

(2) officers provide Members of the Panel with a copy of the final version of the specification of requirements before this was presented to the July Cabinet meeting;

(3) Members' concerns about how to achieve centralised dealings with the media be reflected in the report to the July meeting of Cabinet.

42. **Any Other Business:**

(i) New Council Website

The Chairman reported that the website would be launched at the end of July, delayed in part by an agreed review of the content management system. Officers agreed to provide Members with a briefing note on the state of progress of objectives relating to the new website.

RESOLVED: To provide Members with written details of progress on the website.

(ii) Role of the Panel

Members discussed the remit and status of the Panel, taking the view that it should cover communications as a whole. Alternatives proposed were:

- a cross-party working group on communications
- a working group on communications
- an Advisory Panel on communications.

RESOLVED: That the possibility of changing the remit and status of the Panel be addressed in the report to the July meeting of Cabinet on the Communications Review.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.17 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR PAUL OSBORN
Chairman