

HARROW BUSINESS CONSULTATIVE PANEL MINUTES

24 JANUARY 2011

Chairman: * Councillor Keith Ferry

Councillors: * Kam Chana * Yogesh Teli (1)
* Ajay Maru

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

1. Appointment of Reserve Member

RESOLVED: To note the appointment of Councillor John Nickolay as a Reserve Member of the Harrow Business Consultative Forum for the 2010/11 Municipal Year in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 1.5.

2. Attendance by Reserve Member

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Susan Hall

Councillor Yogesh Teli

3. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made.

4. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ajay Maru be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Harrow Business Consultative Panel for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2010/11.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2010 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

6. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

RESOLVED ITEMS

7. INFORMATION REPORT - Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy Proposals

The Panel received a presentation from the Corporate Director Finance on the budget and medium term financial strategy proposals.

In response to questions from Members it was noted that:

- the estimate for commercial business rates for a particular property is provided by the Valuation Office. The rateable value for business premises was the same as for the Council Tax, the only variation being the multiplier;
- the rateable value was calculated by the Valuation Office. The multiplier was set by the government which was the figure charged by the Council;
- Harrow Council did not receive all the Business Rates generated in the area, the distribution was calculated by the government. Information was available on the web which identified the valuation of all buildings. However, professional advice should be sought on the basis of the valuation as it was not a straightforward exercise;
- details for applications for hardship relief were distributed with the rate demands and were available on the Council's website;
- the reference to service charges in the presentation did not apply to businesses. It referred to adjustments in Housing being made to service charges, such as for communal areas.

The Panel discussed the lack of attendance at the meeting by business representatives. Officers explained that this meeting was part of a programme of consultation and that there was a statutory requirement to

consult the Business Community on the budget proposals. Business representatives had been invited to the meeting.

Initiatives had previously been taken to encourage business participation, such as the holding of quarterly meetings of the Panel. Thereafter the meetings had been arranged by Harrow In Business and the Chamber of Commerce but the attendance remained poor. There was also Councillor representation on outside bodies such as the Harrow In Business Board and North West London Chamber Board.

Members were aware that Harrow Council did not have control of the distribution of business rates collected in the area as this was undertaken by Government. However, meetings of the Panel provided the opportunity for business representatives to comment on the levels of spend and budget categories.

A Member undertook to provide information on whether there was a statutory requirement to assist businesses with Business Continuity. If there was such a requirement, the information could be included in the booklet which accompanied the tax demand.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 7.55 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR KEITH FERRY
Chairman