

CABINET MINUTES

13 DECEMBER 2012

Chairman: * Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

Councillors: * Bob Currie * Phillip O'Dell
* Margaret Davine * David Perry
* Keith Ferry * Sachin Shah
* Mitzi Green * Bill Stephenson
* Graham Henson

In attendance: Susan Hall Minute 542
(Councillors) Barry Macleod-Cullinane Minute 542
Paul Osborn Minute 542

* Denotes Member present

538. Declarations of Interest

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

539. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2012, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

540. Petitions

Petition in favour of the rebuild of Vaughan Primary School

Shane Tucker, a local resident, presented a petition, signed by 185 people, with the following terms of reference:

“We, the undersigned, are in favour of the proposal to expand, rebuild and redevelop the Vaughan School site.

By increasing the school to a three-form entry, we will be supporting Harrow Council and the local community regarding the high demand on school places.

The school is successful and over subscribed and by expanding we will create more places for local families.

By redeveloping the site, we will have a modern fit for purpose accommodation, which allows for the children to be educated on a safe and secure site.

The condition of the existing school building is not fit for purpose with asbestos, heating and roofing issues jeopardising the day to day running of the school.”

RESOLVED: That the petition be received and referred to the Corporate Directors of Environment and Enterprise and Children and Families and the Portfolio Holders for Planning and Regeneration and Children, Schools and Families.

541. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that the following public questions had been received:

1.

Questioner: Elizabeth Sadler

Asked of: Councillor Margaret Davine, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

Question: Re: Strategic Review of Learning Disability Accommodation:

Are you aware that the proposed changes could have a detrimental effect on the lives of the residents of these homes?

Many adults with learning disabilities find change extremely difficult to deal with and many rely on their current carers having an intimate knowledge of their needs.

The residents living in Gordon Avenue and Woodlands Drive, for example, have lived together for many years, [25+ for Woodlands Drive], in a family setting and all have close links with the local community. The residents in these two homes are mainly over 65yrs old

& could be moved to elderly care homes - an unsuitable solution.

Answer: Thank you Elizabeth for coming and asking your question.

I am aware that possible changes to this kind of residential care can cause anxiety for the people concerned and that is why we identified, in our report to Cabinet, that we would take our time; we would talk to all the families, everyone that we thought would be concerned about it and that is what we have been doing.

As we go forward from the formal consultation, we will continue to work with people and their families to make sure we get the best solution we can for all. I will work with officers to make sure they are working with the people that are concerned and their families through the transition phase.

On your point about how important friendships are. I certainly understand that and there are all sorts of ways we can help people to continue with friendships whether they are living directly together with people or not and we will certainly make that a priority.

Supplemental Question: I speak on behalf of Advocacy Voice. We are aware of the process and we have been involved in the process. I think we are concerned because the timescale is relatively quite short.

I appreciate what you are saying about keeping friendships alive and ways of doing that. For example, there is one man who is very concerned about whether he would be able to go somewhere where he could take his shed because he spends all his days in his shed inventing things and it is things like that which can make all the difference to people's care and it is difficult when they have been living together for so long.

Supplemental Answer: I do understand those sorts of problems but, and you said it was such a short consultation. The formal consultation is quite short but we are not bringing the outcomes of the review because it is a big review. It started before the formal consultation and we have been working for a long time and I have been making clear to our officers that are working on this that they have to take their time and deal sensitively with the people.

Of course, anyone who has been living in a place for a long time and having to go through this will find it very difficult but we are not bringing the outcome of the

review back to Cabinet for decision until March 2013. So although we have gone through the formal review, we are going to go on working with the residents and trying to find the best solution we can.

2.

Questioner: Lynn Kimm
[asked by Brian Rayner]

Asked of: Councillor Margaret Davine, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

Question: Re: Strategic Review of Learning Disability Accommodation:

Are you aware that the shortness of the consultation is exacerbating the problems?

A single locum Social Worker is completing 40 odd assessments comprising one interview between late October & December 2012.

With the best will in the world it is just not possible without prior knowledge of the residents to understand the nuances of the needs of a person in this short time scale.

Answer: Thank you Mr Rayner for the question.

I can see that if you just think of the review/consultation period, which is 12 weeks, which is a statutory period that looks quite a short time. However, as I said to the previous questioner, we have been taking care that we do it very sensitively and carefully, consulting with people and their carers, their families and people that are interested and there was even a meeting in the evening to enable people who work to come to that.

Although it is a positive that there is a dedicated and skilled social worker, she is not doing that job on her own and although she has the oversight of a lot of it and it is good to have her there. I have a large team of officers that have been involved in this and going and working with and talking to the people concerned and their families.

So I would say that we are doing everything that we can to take our time and make sure we listen to everybody. The social worker who is completing the reviews and assessments for the residents has already completed 28

of the 36 and she has access to previous reviews and information. She is also working with the staff that look after the people and with their families.

We started this back in the summer before we brought it to Cabinet to get the agreement to go ahead and we are not bringing the final review back until March 2013.

Supplemental Question: Do you have any provision to ensure that individuals when they are consulted in this way, have the benefit of the advice and help of independent advocates?

I believe that advocates have suffered in recent times with the funding problems and I do not believe that all the people concerned at the moment have that sort of support?

Supplemental Answer: I have had some correspondence from relatives that have been concerned that they were not convinced that all the people with learning disabilities at a meeting really understood everything.

We do have advocates helping them and we know these people. It is not a large group of people we are dealing with and we have known them for a long time. So some of them are much more capable of understanding and others are not and I am sure we are giving the right support but I will check on this.

3.

Questioner: Mrs Rosalyn Neale

Asked of: Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

Question: Since Vaughan School does not currently have a cycle policy due to safety issues inside and outside of the school could you please explain to me how the Council could work with the school to implement cycling solutions as advised in your email of 20th November?

Answer: Good evening Mrs Neale.

The Council will work to support the school with its School Travel Plan, which is reviewed annually. Each annual review will take into account the increased numbers of pupils and staff as the school expands gradually until 2018. The Council's Road Safety Education and Training team will be available to support the school.

Mrs Neale: I do not see that you have actually answered where I said that the school does not have a cycle policy and they have safety issues inside and out of the school, so how can you therefore work with them?

Cllr Green: Mrs Neale, we will happily work with the residents and the school to ensure there is a School Travel Plan that will meet everybody's needs.

Supplemental Question: Well, I am sorry but you have not answered the question and you are obviously not going to. So therefore my supplementary question is:

According to the Travel Plan, numbers using bikes are decreasing, so why are you increasing the number of cycle racks?

I am also taking this opportunity to ask why you have not responded to our emails of 22, 26 and 29 November 2012 yet, despite this you are quoted by the Harrow Times, on the front page, as stating "we have given full answers to all questions and have done so throughout the process" which is obviously not correct.

Supplemental Answer: Right, on the first part of your supplemental question, it is a matter for the governing body as well, to decide how many cycle racks to have. I will repeat what I have said before, that when it comes down to it, we will happily work with the school, with the governing body and with residents to try and find a School Travel Plan that works for everybody.

On the second part of your question, we have done, officers and myself have done, everything we can to answer all your questions as well as we can with the information that we have at hand. The matter is now with Planning. We respect your views, we understand your views, we have heard your questions at all the Committees and we have done everything we can to answer your questions as fully as we possibly can.

4.

Questioner: Graeme Neale

Asked of: Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

Question: Re: the Vaughan School Expansion
The school currently has 34 parking spaces they also use their drive for up to an additional 5 car park spaces so a total of 39 spaces. The new plans show a total of

35 spaces i.e. a reduction of 4. Can you please explain the rationale for this as it is not unrealistic to assume that there will be a 50% increase in demand for parking spaces, not a decrease?

Answer: Good evening Mr Neale.

Vaughan school aspires to be a “walk to” school for pupils and staff. The demand for car parking spaces will not increase by 50% at Vaughan. Over time the 7 new classes will each need a teacher and possibly some support staff, but many posts, for example, the headteacher, will not be increased.

Car parking spaces in any school expansion proposals would not be increased by up to 50% as this would not be consistent with Harrow’s Transport Strategy. The car parking spaces proposed are the maximum that can be achieved given the physical constraints of the site and the design proposal.

Supplemental Question: There will obviously be a significant increase in teachers and the School Travel Plan itself says that many staff would prefer to walk but distance or the fact of carrying sets of books to mark etc., means that they need to use the car. They also say that, consequently, there will be an increase of staff travelling by car and more parking facilities will be needed due to the CPZ around the school, disallowing staff to park on the surrounding roads.

So the school themselves say they will need more parking spaces, so where are these extra teachers going to park?

Supplemental Answer: This is a question that you can put to the Planning Committee. For all of these questions now, which are very detailed regarding the actual plan that is proposed is going to be heard at the Planning Committee on 20 February 2013 and these are the details that the Planning Committee will go into. You will have full opportunity to put your views to that meeting and you can also write to the Member responsible for Planning with those questions.

5.

Questioner: David Passes
(asked by Ivor Kennedy)

Asked of: Councillor Phillip O’Dell, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety

Question: After several unsuccessful meetings with Council officials and after the presentation of a well supported petition by the residents of Green Lane, Stanmore, (which we believe has been ignored by the road safety committee), would Councillor O'Dell please make his suggestions to the residents on how we might proceed to get some action by the local authority to reduce the traffic volumes using Green Lane, before either serious injury, or a death might occur to a resident or schoolchild
....

Answer: Thank you for your question.

As you touched upon, the residents did produce a petition which was considered by the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel (TARSAP) and, following that, the Council undertook traffic surveys and accident analyses to investigate the petitioners' concerns. A meeting was organised with the lead petitioners and Ward Councillors to discuss the request within the petition.

The officer's report subsequently highlighted that the volume of traffic and number of reported accidents were not significant and did not recommend taking any action because this issue was not considered a high priority. A more recent review of traffic conditions and a further meeting with the petitioners clarified there is still no change in this situation.

However, within the current traffic and transportation programme of works there is an allocation of funding in 2013/14 to consider a scheme outside St John's school adjacent to Stanmore Hill and Green Lane and it is possible that these issues could be revisited when that project commences.

Supplemental Comment: Obviously as you can imagine, I have taken part in all of those conversations. I have had extensive meetings with the officers. They are just not getting the message.

The officers believe that the road is manageable; we the residents are telling them that the road is becoming unmanageable and we are warning them that there will be a serious accident there. There is daily conflict there, there is daily bad behaviour, and conflict between drivers.

What we are actually looking for is some meaningful action. We have given over 11 different suggestions to your officers, each of which would have some affect on the traffic flow and we are looking to reduce the traffic

flow on what is a residential road that is being widely used as an access road for the M1 and a rat run through Stanmore. What we are not actually getting is any type of meaningful engagement, where they take the residents' wishes into account. We are actually shouting at a wall that is not listening to us.

The following questions were not reached in the time limit of 15 minutes. It was noted that written responses would be provided, which have been reproduced below:

6.

Questioner: Shane Tucker

Asked of: Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

Question: Vaughan Primary School agreed to take a bulge class in September 2012 which meant that the catchment area for admissions for 2012/13 increased in radial distance from the school from 0.618 miles with 90 places from only 0.296 miles in the previous year with 60 places. There is an obvious need for more school places in the locality and the increase in distance allowed for families to attend their local school. If Vaughan cannot expand how will the Council address the need of the children to attend their local school?

Written Response: You are quite correct that the Council wants to provide high quality school places as close to pupils' homes as possible and has to do this in the context of the funding position that Harrow, like all Councils, finds itself in.

Meeting the increasing demand for school places is a very challenging task and it requires a strong partnership with the Council and its schools. By working with schools, Harrow has been able to offer a school place to all parents who have applied on time.

Cabinet has agreed a School Place Planning Strategy that combines bulge, or temporary, classes with permanent expansions. As part of this Strategy, since September 2009, a total of 30 additional reception classes have been opened, and in June 2012 Cabinet agreed the permanent expansion of 9 schools across 7 sites. The growth is predicted to continue and officers are working with schools to develop phase two of the primary school expansion programme.

The expansion of Vaughan Primary School is one of the

key parts of this strategy. It is a successful school and popular with parents. The current catchment area of 0.6m makes it a very local school. Without this and other school expansions, the parents and families of Harrow will not be able to attend local schools and the concept of the school as part of the local community will be lost.

There are inevitable tensions caused between the need to provide school places and the issues that this raises for residents. The Council is committed to providing the high quality school places required, at the best value for our limited money, whilst doing all that is possible to minimize the impact on residents.

7.

Questioner: Dipak Raja

Asked of: Councillor Keith Ferry, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

Question: Re: The Vaughan School Expansion

As the new building will completely cover the school field can you please tell me what is currently the total square footage for outdoor play and sports area including hard and soft play areas and what will the total square footage of play and sports area be including hard and soft areas after the proposed building works?

Written Response: There will be an overall increase in the total outdoor team games and informal areas. The current total is approximately 5,925 square metres and the proposed total is approximately 6,727 square metres. The usage of this space will be enhanced by the provision of a multi use surface that extends the times that it can be used.

8.

Questioner: Anant Shah

Asked of: Councillor Keith Ferry, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration

Question: Re: Vaughan School Expansion

Now that a Flood Risk Assessment for the FLOOD ZONE 3 is being undertaken can you please advise me if this will effect the application being heard at the January planning committee meeting?

**Written
Response:**

The Architects/ Consultants preparing the scheme were advised that the school was within a flood zone, and a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) would therefore need to be submitted with their planning application. The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which provides the most up to date information, shows that the school site is in Flood Zone 3.

This assessment and its impact on the proposed development will be made public and considered as part of the planning application in the spring.

The planning application will not be considered by the Planning Committee in January. At this stage, the Local Planning Authority is anticipating that the application will be reported to the Planning Committee at their meeting on 20 February 2013.

9.

Questioner: Elizabeth Kaptur

Asked of: Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

Question: Regarding the Vaughan School expansion, can you advise me of the latest position regarding central Government funding for this expansion including whether you believe the funding will be received before the 28th February deadline set by Catherine Doran?

**Written
Response:**

Harrow Council is committed to expanding this popular and successful school from September 2013 to meet the increased demand for primary school places in the area.

Funding for the expansion is in place from local and national funding. Central government funding will contribute through the Department for Education's annual capital funding allocations and it is expected that the amount of this grant for 2013/14 will be announced in January 2013. We are also waiting to hear whether the Priority Schools Building Programme funding may yet be available to the Council as a result of our correspondence with the Education Funding Agency. At this stage, I cannot predict whether we will know by 28 February. Regardless and as I have already said, the funding for Phase 1 of the Primary Expansion programme, including Vaughan, has been agreed.

The government has kept moving the date on the announcement of the annual capital funding. We are also expecting a one-off capital basic need allocation for

which the timescales are again unclear. We are in the very difficult position, as are many local authorities, in relation to capital allocation. We do however have to provide places for children and have a statutory duty to do so.

542. Councillor Questions

RESOLVED: To note the following Councillor Questions had been received:

1.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: Can you explain why you claimed that the assumption that Council Tax will rise by 2%, which is mentioned 12 times in the Budget documentation, is an 'unfounded rumour'?

Answer: Thank you for your question.

What we have done is what we have always done. That is, we put a default number in until we have made a decision. We cannot make any decisions until we know our grant from the government. This year it is almost a month later than in previous years. This makes decision-making extremely difficult.

The government keeps moving the goalposts on a number of issues including their pace of deficit reductions, scope of local government and in shunting costs to local government. While the Labour Government in the past has increased the grant to local government in cash terms, this government is cutting it – 28% over 4 years.

Given that the Council Tax and government grant are two major sources of income to the Council, it would be irresponsible of this administration to do anything other than wait and see what our government grant is.

Supplemental Question: Last year's budget was written when you did not know what the grant was going to be and there were comments within that budget that you knew that there would be a freeze on and there were allowances for it.

Given that so much work goes into a budget, surely you should be in some sort of position to know what the figures going forward will be and therefore in your considered view, do you consider that the Council Tax

will go up, as is absolutely evidenced in the draft budget?

Supplemental Answer: We do not know our grant from the government and the government keeps changing it. We do not know what they are going to do. Until we know what they will give us, we cannot make any decisions.

2.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: If the assumed Council Tax increase is indeed an 'unfounded rumour', can you confirm which of the proposed cuts or investments in the Budget are the most likely to be affected if the Council Tax rate is adjusted up or down from 2%?

Answer: This is the third time you have asked me the same question, so I congratulate you on finding many different ways of asking the same question. I could just repeat my first answer but I am not going to. Obviously it is not quite there with you at the moment, so I will do this slowly:

- (1) We start with a position where the government is cutting what they give us.
- (2) Then we take the fact that we have additional demands on our services.
- (3) Then we need to work out how to pay for it. So when we have got all these things, we need to work out how to pay for it.

So that is where we have got the problem. We do not know what we are getting from the government. So that is one big chunk of our income that we simply do not know and therefore, your question is very hard to answer. At present, I simply do not know a big, major source of income to the Council and what it will be and therefore I cannot answer your question.

Comment: That is most peculiar because you said you answered it 3 times and unfounded, by the way, means no basis. Since an unfounded rumour is mentioned 12 times in your budget, I will proceed because I think the one who actually does not understand here and worryingly does not know what is going to happen is the Portfolio Holder for Finance. I find that worrying as I am sure everybody

in the audience does because they are Council Tax payers.

3.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Phillip O'Dell, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety

Question: The Budget contains over £2 million of cuts in Environment Services, before even taking PRISM into account. Can you confirm what services are included in the general £673k and £81k 'public realm service reductions' over the next two years?

Answer: We have to consider all areas of spending in making proposals for this budget, during a difficult time with severe cuts imposed on public services by the government. The proposals put forward provide a fair distribution of the savings with plans to protect vulnerable people and maintain Harrow as a place for growth where people want to come, work and live.

Supplemental Question: If I can remind you, I am particularly passionate about the environment, as everybody knows. £3.5m is coming off the budget you are responsible for. Would you not agree that your Manifesto says "look around Harrow" (this is before you came to power), you allege "its shabby streets not swept properly, potholes in the road, unmended and broken pavements, neglect everywhere". If you believe that in your Manifesto, the question to you is, do you think it is going to help by removing £3.5m from that very same budget?

Supplemental Answer: No, it probably will not help with that but those cuts are not of our making. They are the making of this Conservative-led government and the dithering by this government, as Councillor Sachin Shah has just indicated, on exactly what our settlement is going to be this year.

4.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Phillip O'Dell, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety

Question: Do you plan to ring-fence or protect funding for any individual Public Realm Services while these cuts are carried out?

Answer: We have examined all areas during our considerations and make proposals that will support residents to enable growth in Harrow.

Supplemental Question: How on earth is this going to enable growth?

Supplemental Answer: If you read some of the budget proposals around supporting local businesses, this will encourage growth in Harrow.

5.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Phillip O'Dell, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety

Question: The Highways Maintenance budget is to be cut by £273k; can you confirm what specific impact on the service this cut will have?

Answer: We had great success last year in reducing the cost of highways through the re-letting of the contract which allowed savings to be made without any impact on the quality or volume of work being carried out.

We will work with our suppliers to ensure that we have taken all opportunities for efficiency. We will continue to prioritise safety works on highways but some schemes will have to wait longer before being implemented.

Supplemental Question: So you are confirming in effect then that nobody will notice any difference other than that things are done slightly slower. The potholes etc, will be maintained. Everything will be just as good even with the £273,000 removed from the budget?

Supplemental Answer: Yes, they probably will and I would also like to share with Cabinet an email I received recently from a resident in Pinner and it says:

“I am writing to you about the work that recently started on the pavements in the new footway which is almost finished. We have been very impressed with the men who worked on the pavements. They worked very hard whilst they created a really impressive piece of work, reminiscent of a boulevard. Please pass on my thanks to all those involved.”

6.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: As an overall approach, do you think it reasonable that as a consequence of your Budget, residents will be unable to speak to the Council regarding public realm issues and will be limited to an online form alone?

Answer: That is a very good question. I share the concerns you have.

We always care for residents but given the cuts we have had to face, we need to think what we can do.

Secondly, within the budget constraints, how much help we can give the residents.

So we considered this very carefully. It is not just a quick, knee jerk reaction.

The reduction in resources is spread over a 4 year period, enabling us sufficient time to assist people to make the transition to online services.

The areas where we are scaling back our service are areas that are well served by online forms and the MyHarrow account.

Over 85% of households in Harrow have access to broadband internet. Those customers who do not have access or are nervous when using the web are welcome to come to the Civic Centre where our staff will guide them through the forms.

We are also investing in upgrading the computers in our local libraries – our people's network. The upgrade has been long awaited and we will also be putting wi-fi into our libraries. This will all help.

We are also going to put more Public Realm services through the MyHarrow account, which has over 28,000 users. This will allow users to receive updates on outstanding issues.

There are over 900 Neighbourhood Champions who are able to report issues to the Council.

We currently receive 1,700 webforms each month

regarding Public Realm issues.

The government is going the same line, using more on their websites.

Supplemental Question: Yes, are you aware that just today the Public Realm forms were down, no one could actually use them? Are you aware that at the last Cabinet meeting, the Committee Section part of the website was down so no one could look at the minutes for the meeting or the agenda for the meeting? Are you aware that hardly any residents can send emails to Councillors? Councillor Green has not responded to emails because she has not received them.

The Mobile and Flexible savings project that was meant to deliver savings, all the savings have now been removed from the budget.

So my supplementary is: How much longer are you going to keep the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services on, given the collapsing ruins of his Portfolio?

Supplemental Answer: Paul, do you know that when we came to power, what state the computers and the IT system were? You look into the group office computers and see how many years old they are.

Our starting point was a low base. It is going to take time to put the most modern IT system and make it work. There will be hiccups. I am sorry that cannot be helped.

7.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts
(answered by Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance)

Question: Can you confirm if any extra methods are being introduced or practices being changed to assist residents in paying their Council Tax?

Answer: We are looking at our collection policy in light of the Harrow local council tax support. The change means that some people pay Council Tax for the first time. There will be 11,000 people in Harrow who will be affected.

I do want to thank the voluntary sector, who as part of our Council Tax Benefits Steering Group, have suggested changes. We will be working with them over the coming months to get this right.

Of course, the excellent Scrutiny Review, chaired by Councillor Ferrari, will be at the top of our minds.

We will also be launching our Harrow Help Scheme. This Scheme helps people worst affected by the despicable cuts to benefits by the government. The details of how this Scheme will be run are currently out to consultation and you can respond via the Council's website.

Supplemental Question: Are you happy that the bailiff contract that is being used to seek people out who are not paying properly, has a profit share and that effectively more work, more chasing of people who have problems is going to help to balance the books.

Supplemental Answer:
(answered by Cllr Shah) The important point about that contract is that we are able to have two streams within our collection policy to allow those most vulnerable people affected by Council Tax support to be treated differently and within a different scheme to those who are not.

It allows us to separate those that cannot pay with those that will not pay. So, I am happy with the new bailiff contract.

The following questions were not reached in the time limit of 15 minutes. It was noted that written responses would be provided, which have been reproduced below:

8.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Margaret Davine, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

Question: Can you confirm if the £500k 'earmarked investment' you intend to secure from Harrow PCT is the same £500k the Council originally gave back to the PCT under the s.256 agreement?

Written Answer: Barry, as you know currently each year the government allocates resources to PCTs, which they must transfer to Councils via a Section 256 agreement.

This money can be spent on a range of things ranging from protecting eligibility for adult social care to investment in joint priorities. In addition there are a number of other funding streams given to PCTs/CCGs to be transferred/spent joint with Councils.

In 2011, we agreed jointly that £500K would be spent by the PCT to help meet its social care provision.

The £500K we have planned for in 2013/14 assumes that all the Section 256 money is passed to the Council. This extra £500K is our expected extra income from the other grants/allocations made by the government – these includes grants for carers, re-ablement and winter pressures.

9.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

Question: Could you provide a breakdown of the £500k in procurement savings Children's Services intends to make in 2013-14?

Written Answer: The Directorate has worked very closely with Procurement over the last 18 months; during that time a full review of all services have been undertaken ensuring Value for Money and Service Rebates; were appropriate.

The £500,000 savings in 2013/14 represents the second phase of the procurement strategy. Already key tenders/negotiations have just concluded and/or in the final stages of agreement. These include but are not limited to:

- savings from various contracted services due to the duplication of service across the Directorate or Health and a refocusing of commissioning intentions;
- savings contributed from the joint working with WLA Children's Services Improvement & Efficiency Programme in respect of both Children Looked After and Special Educational Needs placements;

- savings over the life of the contract from the recent Systemic Tender.

10.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: Could you provide a comprehensive list of all in-year savings you intend to make in 2013-14?

Written Answer: The attached list shows those savings that will commence after the start of the financial year.

[This is attached separately at Minutes Appendix I].

11.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: Can you confirm which manifesto pledges you made in 2010 you know will not be achieved by 2014?

Written Answer: Our manifesto is a set of aspirations which we put to the electorate in 2010 to be achieved over a four year administration.

In two and a half years we have fulfilled 90% of our pledges – a truly remarkable achievement. We look forward to being answerable for our stewardship in the election in 2014.

12.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: How significantly do you think Public Realm Services will be affected by your budget?

Written Answer: We have made proposals that balance the savings needed across all parts of the Council. We have been innovative in our approach to public realm maintenance and will continue to work to minimise the impact of the savings on the environment of Harrow.

13.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: What lessons have you learned from the problems regarding changing the print services contract?

Written Answer: The procurement exercise that we undertook prior to the end of the previous print contract will deliver significant savings. Enabling us to further protect front line services from the impact of the government's funding cuts. Those savings are built in to the draft MTFS that we will consider tonight

Not only will the new contract save significant sums but we have also challenged what we believe to be unfair payment terms within the previous contract amounting to over £500,000. Regrettably, our challenge provoked an extreme response from the supplier who withdrew print support services without notice.

It took a few days to put in place alternative support arrangements and during this time there were interruptions to normal business efficiency, but with no direct impact on delivery of services to the public. Importantly, if our challenge is successful, we will make a significant 'in year' saving and be able to put that money back in to services for our community.

In terms of the lessons learnt:

We should not be afraid to challenge what we believe is unfair and we should be prepared to take risks where there are potentially big benefits. But, when taking risks, we should ensure we are prepared to manage the potential consequences, however extreme they may be.

14.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: Where does Harrow stand in terms of the highest/lowest Council Tax rates across London?

Written Answer: The average Band D Council Tax in each region for 2012-13 varies with the average for London being £1,304 for a band D property, £1,401 average for a Metropolitan area £1492 for a Shire area.

Harrow's band D in 2012/13 is £1186.55 (or £1496.37 including preceptor charges). I set out below the latest DCLG data showing actual figures for the financial year 2012/13 for all London Boroughs. You will see that Harrow is the 4th highest after Havering, Richmond Upon Thames and Kingston Upon Thames.

Local authority Average council tax for the authority excluding parish precepts (Band D)

DCLG Data

**LONDON AUTHORITIES
INNER LONDON**

City of London	805
Camden	1,022
Greenwich	981
Hackney	998
Hammersmith & Fulham	781
Islington	962
Kensington & Chelsea	783
Lambeth	925
Lewisham	1,042
Southwark	912
Tower Hamlets	886
Wandsworth	377
Westminster	378

OUTER LONDON

Barking & Dagenham	1,016
Barnet	1,113
Bexley	1,129
Brent	1,059
Bromley	991
Croydon	1,150
Ealing	1,060
Enfield	1,100
Haringey	1,184
Harrow	1,187
Havering	1,195
Hillingdon	1,113
Hounslow	1,091
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,353
Merton	1,107

Newham	946
Redbridge	1,096
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,287
Sutton	1,141
Waltham Forest	1,152

15.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: Are there any specific areas of priority where your 2013-14 budget has sought to protect funding to services as much as possible?

Written Answer: The Council is facing very significant financial pressures as a result of cuts in funding from Central Government combined with cost pressures, many of which are also created by Central Government policy.

We are attempting to minimise the adverse impact of the savings necessary across the range of services provided and providing for increased costs where there are increased demands.

Particular examples of this contained in our budget proposals for 2013-14 are:

Homelessness - £1m of growth resulting from the Government's benefits reforms.

Adults Demographic growth £2.8m.

16.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: How important do you think front-facing services are?

Written Answer: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about our approach to front line services and how our draft budget protects critical front line services at a time of very significant cuts, forced on us by Government.

Our budget is based on the following key principles:

- we have made savings in the Civic Centre.

We have done this first, because our priority is to protect front line services where we can. Let me give you some examples of what we have done:

- reducing the cost of staff and reducing the number of senior managers from 30 to 20;
- improving procurement to get the most out of our contracts, for example; our print contract saving of over £500k;
- reducing the costs of our IT by adopting more up to date technology.

Our other key principles are all about front line services:

- we have ensured the services people care about are protected from drastic cuts;
- we are protecting residents most in need, in particular, by helping them get out of poverty and back to work;
- we are encouraging growth and investment in Harrow supporting the Town Centre, local businesses, district centres and by opening up our land to investment.

Remember we are a Council that Listens and Leads. A Council that brought in Lets Talk. A Council that engages with the Community, as we did the other night at the Civic Centre with the local community talking through our draft budget. They liked the principles on which the budget is built.

So, our final principle:

- we are working with our partners and listening to our residents to make sure the right decisions are made for the community.

And we will continue to do so.

17.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: What lessons has the Council learned from the accounting errors at West Waste?

Written Answer: The West London Waste Authority is a separate statutory disposal authority with its own governance arrangements. They have commissioned a review by Price Waterhouse Coopers into the mistakes made. The WLWA discussed this at their meeting on 20 July 2012 and they have published the report and the recommendations and their recovery plan for public viewing.

The Council will monitor the work of the WLWA through their recovery because of the significant costs of waste disposal.

18.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: Could you provide some specific examples of how the Let's Talk consultation programme has informed the 2013-14 budget?

Written Answer: We ran a Let's Talk event in September, and also on 11 December, where as Leader it was great to see the level of interest and debate in the key issues and challenges facing the Council. Both of these Let's Talk events were specifically related to the budgetary challenges going forward. Proposals coming through from the September meeting have influenced what we have put in our draft budget. There were many different ideas across the full range of Council services, but some specific examples are:

- reduce overtime rates for staff: Our modernising terms and conditions project delivers against this;
- we should invest in keeping more people at home: We will ensure that our excellent reablement service continues to enable our residents to stay independent and continue to live at home longer;
- the Council should help people back into work: Our Xcite scheme will continue, as we see this as a key initiative during these difficult economic

times of helping those most in need'

- concern for the poor in the borough and discrepancies in wealth – through this draft budget we set our intention to launch the Harrow HELP Scheme.

There are many other examples, but I believe that this Council still remains a listening Council and this draft budget exemplifies this. We will also need to carry out further consultation on some of the specific proposals in this draft budget and we will do this in the same spirit that we have carried out previous ones.

I'd also remind everyone that 2011 was our year of Community Debate, where we carried out a substantial amount of consultation and engagement activity, through Let's Talk and other forms. We gathered a lot of views from our residents and service users through these consultations, some of which remain valid for our thinking in this draft budget.

One example is our Children's Centre consultation during 2011, where service users told us that what they value most was skilled and experienced staff, and that this is more important than buildings. The proposals on Children's Centres in the current draft budget are developed from this, although we do plan to do very thorough consultation before implementing the proposed new model. We obviously expect there will be changes to our proposals following this consultation as we gain new insights from our users.

19.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: In the light of public anger over decisions including, but not limited to, Whitchurch Pavilion, Vaughan School and Anmer Lodge, is your administration planning to undertake a review of how it conducts consultations?

Written Answer: This Administration is proud of our commitment to undertake meaningful consultation with our residents.

As a Council we set out to listen to our residents but also to lead once we have done this.

In respect of the three significant projects, which you

have referred to in your question, we have carried out extensive dialogue with residents on these, and accept the fact that there is always the chance of some disagreement amongst residents as to the most appropriate way forward - in a democracy this is both right and inevitable.

It is therefore our job, as the Council, to take all views into account when reaching decisions, and to lead when we have reached a considered conclusion.

Obviously, we are always looking at ways to improve how we engage and consult with our residents, but I don't see any need to carry out a review of how we conduct consultation at this stage.

To this end, I think it is worth recapping what we have done in the way of engagement and consultation with these three projects:

Re: Whitchurch Playing Fields

A report to Cabinet in June of this year dealt solely with the very extensive consultation and engagement activity, relevant to this project. This consultation was invaluable in then arriving at the final decision.

Re: Anmer Lodge

I would be very surprised if the majority of people living and working, or with businesses, in the Stanmore Broadway area, do not know about the existence of this project, and the broad objectives, which the Council is trying to deliver.

The Council is committed to support our District Centres, and this project will secure the vitality and prosperity of this important centre for years to come.

Through the dialogue which has taken place to date, this Administration, has obtained a clear understanding of the aspirations and concerns, of local people. As a result, I am doing everything possible to ensure that we respond appropriately to the many conversations that have taken place so far.

This project will ultimately be presented in detail to the local community and early in the New Year our development partner, assisted by the Council, will engage in detailed conversations with local people prior to any planning application being finalised.

Re: Vaughan School

There have been several stages of consultation with regards Vaughan School:

- 1) Borough-wide primary expansion programme consultation: A borough-wide consultation was undertaken between 10 October 2011 and 11 November 2011. The outcomes of this consultation were reported to Cabinet on 15 December 2011.
- 2) Statutory consultation about the expansion of Vaughan school: Statutory consultations were held between 16 January 2012 and 27 February 2012. The outcomes of the statutory consultations were reported to Cabinet on 4 April 2012.
- 3) Publication of statutory proposals: Statutory proposals were published for a four week representation period from Monday 16 April to Monday 14 May 2012. At its meeting on 20 June 2012, Cabinet approved the statutory proposals to expand Vaughan School permanently.
- 4) Statutory consultations on planning applications: An open evening for parents and local residents was held at Vaughan Primary School on 18 July 2012. As a result of petitioning by some of the local residents that attended the meeting on 18 July, Harrow Council organised a second meeting with the concerned residents and local councillors on 12 September 2012.

As you will know from the recent publication of the Census data, our Borough is growing, and at a faster rate than other parts of London.

We therefore need to match this population growth, with the appropriate growth in our infrastructure if our Borough is to be successful in the future and our residents prosper.

This Administration has developed plans to secure this much needed new infrastructure, which will support future economic growth and therefore the prosperity of our residents.

We recognise that some of these proposals will be a cause of concern for residents living close to the proposed development sites.

However, this Administration will listen to all reasonable concerns and we will do everything that we can to work with local communities, in open and meaningful conversation, to secure appropriate outcomes, which will have benefit for all our residents.

20.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: Can you provide us with a statement showing the financial impact of both making or not making any decisions that are currently out to consultation?

Written Answer: At the time of Cabinet, there were no current consultations with direct financial impacts. There had been earlier consultations e.g. the Council Tax Support Scheme, however this had closed. There are also likely to be other consultations arising from the budget. These will be taken into account when undertaking the risk assessment of the budget in February and the level of contingency and reserves necessary.

21.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: Is it your intention to be in a position to accept the Council Tax Freeze Grant by the time the final Budget is presented in February?

Written Answer: Until we know our government grant we cannot make any decisions on Council Tax.

22.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: Can you provide details of any contracts signed, schemes implemented and decisions made that were either included in the 2012-13 budget or which were made since, which have underspent or overspent from their original cost or saving projections?

**Written
Answer:**

It is still not possible to be definitive on the current year outturn in relation to some savings however set out below is the currently anticipated position:

Children and Families

Demographic growth – Placements. Placement costs are currently £138k over budget. The number of Children Looked After is in line with demographic growth however the cohort of children have higher needs and consequently higher average placement costs.

Loss of Youth Justice Board funding. At the time of setting the 2012/13 budget the YJB had yet to announce the 2012/13 grant. The actual loss of grant was £60k greater than the £123k assumed at the time of setting the 2012/13 budget.

Children's Centres. A new model has been developed, agreed and implemented. In addition to the £800,000 MTFS saving the service has achieved early delivery of £27k of the 2013/14 MTFS savings.

Community, Health and Wellbeing

MTFS savings totalling approximately £3.3m are included in the 2012/13 revenue budget for Community, Health and Wellbeing, some of which are procurement related.

The achievability of these savings is monitored on a regular basis through the monthly budget process, and reported to the Departmental Management Team so that appropriate action is taken. Most of the savings are either rated “Green” where savings have already been fully achieved, or “Amber” where savings are to be achieved later in the year or where mitigating actions have been put in place.

MTFS procurement related savings rated as “Red” for the Period 7 budget monitor are:

CNWL: Mental Health £100k Efficiencies – CNWL have produced an action plan that showed a forecast overspend of £188k of which Harrow's share is £94k; joint work is continuing with CNWL colleagues to reduce their forecast further;

Leisure Contract: additional income target of £75k – although Leisure Centre income has significantly improved since the new contractor took over, the current income forecast is below the ambitious budget target by £207k;

Housing Needs: MTFs saving of £146k from Private Sector Leasing - Private Sector Leasing ("PSL") is preferred to Bed & Breakfast as is more economical and offers longer term accommodation to those who require this. Progress of initiative requires finding willing landlords to participate in an overheated private rented housing market in London.

Environment and Enterprise

Corporate repairs and maintenance. £85k was expected to be realised from a procurement exercise, however this was not reflected in the tender bids.

Resources

Implementation costs of Council Tax Support Scheme £91k more than budgeted.

Learning and Development Commissioning saving £60k not achieved.

Merger of Policy and Partnerships teams delayed - £21k.

Performance management business case delayed - £34k.

Cross Council Efficiencies delayed - £100k.

Delay in establishing Shared Legal service with Barnet - £100k.

23.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: What is the current level of the Council's reserves, and do you have any plans to change the reserves policy?

Written Answer: The current level of reserves is £7.65m. We do not currently plan to change our reserves policy, however it will be reviewed as part of the final budget report to Cabinet in February. As a result of government policy there is now a greater risk on the council's finances and therefore this administration has increased the level of reserves by £1.434m which is 23%. This, I believe is a prudent response to government policy.

543. Key Decision Schedule - December 2012 - February 2013

The Leader of the Councillor informed Cabinet that the report relating to 'Draft Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2016/17' had been deferred to January 2013 Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED: To note the contents of the Key Decision Schedule for December 2012.

544. Progress on Scrutiny Projects

RESOLVED: To receive and note the progress of scrutiny projects.

545. Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget - Report on the self Financing of the HRA

RESOLVED: That the Divisional Director of Housing Services submit a report to the next meeting of Cabinet responding to the findings of the Review Group.

Reason for Decision: To allow a response to be considered and submitted to the Review Group.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

546. Key Decision - Localisation of Council Tax Benefit

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report, which set out the changes to Council Tax Benefits and Local Authorities new responsibilities for the development and adoption of a localised Council Tax Support Scheme by 31 January 2013 with implementation on 1 April 2013. The report provided feedback from the consultation carried out with Harrow residents and stakeholders and showed how the feedback had informed the development of the new localised Council Tax Support Scheme. The Portfolio Holder referred to the impact that government cuts would have on vulnerable people.

The Portfolio Holder referred how, at an early stage, it was recognised that the changes to Council Tax Benefits could have an impact on residents living in Harrow. To understand these impacts and ensure residents were given the opportunity to shape, a partnership driven structure was developed to take the development of a new scheme forward. As a result, a multi-agency Steering Group was formed.

The Portfolio Holder invited Jill Harrison, Chief Executive of Harrow Citizens' Advice Bureau, who sat on the Steering Group to address Cabinet.

Jill Harrison congratulated the Council on the consultation process adopted which had been built on previous consultation exercises. Ms Harrison was pleased with the positive working relationships that had been established from the outset between Council officers. Additionally, the Council's financial position was clarified from the outset which had made the discussions at meetings of the Steering Group realistic. Moreover, the Council Tax benefit scheme had been simplified and was therefore easier to understand. She was pleased that the Council had gone the extra mile to identify ways to mitigate the impact of the proposals on the poorest members of the community. Overall, the consultation process had been fair and reasonable.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked Jill Harrison for her kind words and identified how the engagement process had worked, which had included road shows across the borough and the use of social media. He explained that since the end of the consultation period, the government had announced the availability of a new grant which, for Harrow, was £380,000. However, the implementation of the localisation process would entail an outlay of £2m.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the various options discussed by the Steering Group, including the feedback received to the proposals for change. Of particular note were:

- people with disabilities were likely to be disproportionately affected by the Welfare Reform Act due to multiple impacts;
- people on welfare were less likely to have access to other forms of income and would have limited employment opportunities;
- carers would also be affected.

Cabinet was informed that following contributions from the Steering Group and a questionnaire as part of the consultation document had helped shape the Scheme. There had been a mixed response to the consultation and the Portfolio Holder explained how the Steering Group had arrived at the questions which had formed part of the consultation document. The response level had been high and following comments from the Steering Group, Scheme 1 was considered to be the preferred option, as it reflected the outcome of the consultation to the greatest extent and could be implemented within the resources made available by the government for Council Tax Support.

In summing up, the Portfolio Holder commended the report to Cabinet and that the decision would be taken by full Council. He explained that the 'London Borough of Harrow Council Tax Support Scheme' may require amending for circulation to Council due to further announcements expected from the government in relation to the Council Tax Support Schemes (Default Scheme) Regulations 2012.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing and the Assistant Chief Executive thanked the Steering Group members and the staff from the Housing Benefits Team for their work, particularly on the consultation exercise that the Council could be proud of.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council) That

- (1) the new Harrow Localised Council Tax Support Scheme, at appendix H to the report, be agreed and adopted;
- (2) the parameter configuration set out in Scheme 1 for the two year period April 2013 to March 2015, which fully manages the funding gap, and recommended by officers, be agreed and adopted;
- (3) the Scheme remain in perpetuity after the two year period, with parameters updated as per the Scheme rules, unless a policy decision is taken to replace or alter the Scheme at annual review;
- (4) the existing s13A policy on hardship agreed by Cabinet on the 3 August 2006 and now known as s13A(1)(c) be continued.

Reason for Decision: The Council had carried out a wide consultation to ensure that residents within Harrow were given the opportunity to give their view and help shape the new Council Tax Support Scheme. Feedback from the consultation had informed the recommendations to Cabinet and helped towards identifying the impacts of the changes.

Statutorily the Scheme must be agreed by 31 January 2013 to enable the Council to make the required savings of approximately £3.8m for the year 2013/14 and £5.1m the following year 2014/15. If this deadline was not met and a local scheme agreed, the Council would be required to deliver the default Council Tax Support Scheme. This would not allow the authority to manage the funding gap between the reduced devolved grant given to the Council and the Council Tax Support expected expenditure.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: As set out in the officer report.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

[Call-in does not apply to decisions reserved to Council]

RESOLVED ITEMS

547. Key Decision - Housing Changes Review: Approval of Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy, Consultation Drafts of Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Private Sector Housing Strategy and Allocation Scheme, and update on the draft Housing Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Housing introduced the report, which sought approval of key strategies and policies included within the Housing Changes Review either for adoption or for formal consultation.

The Portfolio Holder added that the matter had been extensively discussed at the special meeting of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum (TLRCF) on 4 December 2012 where concern was expressed about the various proposals. However, the TLRCF had supported the proposals, including the possibility that, as a result of the government's welfare reform, some households might need to move out of Harrow and London to more affordable private rented housing elsewhere. He congratulated officers for their extensive work in this area, and added that a further report would be submitted to the March 2013 meeting of Cabinet.

The Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing outlined the overarching objectives of the Review, particularly the changes in the Housing Strategy that would enable the Council to target sectors of the community, ensure a flexible housing stock, bring empty homes into use and provide more social housing.

The proposals were also welcomed by the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services as being fit for Harrow.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the consultation responses and subsequent amendments to the Tenancy Strategy 2012 be noted;
- (2) the final Tenancy Strategy 2012, at appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (3) the consultation responses to the Tenancy Policy 2012 be noted;
- (4) the final Tenancy Policy 2012, at appendix 2 to the report, which will introduce 12 month probationary tenancies followed by fixed term 5 year flexible tenancies for all new Council tenants from the 1 April 2013, be approved;
- (5) the consultation drafts of the Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Private Sector Housing Strategy, at appendices 4, 5 and 6 to the report, be approved;
- (6) the consultation draft of the proposed amended Housing Allocation Scheme and transitional arrangements, attached at Appendix 7 to the report, be approved;
- (7) Harrow's current Transfer and Lettings Scheme be amended now in order to place all homeless households placed in temporary accommodation in band C, regardless of whether they are in emergency B&B or hostel accommodation, or in longer term temporary accommodation;
- (8) it be noted that the progress and key issues on the draft Housing Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy would be finalised and presented to Cabinet in March 2013;

- (9) expenditure of up to £1.5M from the Affordable Housing Fund towards the development of intermediate housing on Council development sites in Harrow be approved;
- (10) the views of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents Consultative Forum meeting held on 4 December 2012 be noted.

Reason for Decision: To enable the completion of key housing policy and strategy documents and set out the Council's Strategic Housing Vision in responding to the freedoms and flexibilities introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: As set out in the report.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

548. Key Decision - Shared Public Health Team - Inter Authority Agreement Principles

The Portfolio Holder for Adults Social Care, Health and Wellbeing introduced the report, which set out the current position in respect of the establishment of a Shared Public Health team to support the London Boroughs of Harrow and Barnet. The Portfolio Holder drew attention to the key principles, set out at appendix A to the report, and explained, in brief, how the project would come to fruition.

Cabinet was informed that the agreement between the boroughs would be for five years but that either party could give 12 months' notice of an intention for it to be extended. Additionally, the various costs, such as overhead costs, staff costs, underspend and overspend would be apportioned, and that the staff would be employed by Harrow Council. Each borough would be responsible for the contract and the liability for these contracts but there would be extensive monitoring undertaken.

Cabinet noted that the key principles had been agreed and that it was intended to sign the contract in February 2013 once all the detail had been finalised.

The Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing reported that the proposed shared service would help contribute to the overall savings to be made by the Council. He thanked officers and the various parties for their work in bringing this project to fruition.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the principles for the Inter Authority Agreement, as outlined in the report, be endorsed;
- (2) the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, be authorised to:

- (a) agree the terms of and execute an Inter Authority Agreement which reflects the principles outlined in the officer report;
- (b) implement a Shared Public Health team in accordance with that Agreement.

Reason for Decision: To allow the development of a resilient and cost effective public health service to provide improved support to both Councils at a reduced cost and improved capacity.

Alternative Options considered/rejected: As set out in the officer report / Option 2.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

549. Key Decision - Tree Maintenance Access Agreement and Contract

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety introduced the report, which set out an overview of the competitive tendering process undertaken to seek a new contract for the provision of Tree Maintenance, Arboricultural Services, with a view to entering into an Access Agreement with Brent Council and Call-off contract for the provision of Tree Maintenance. Cabinet also considered a confidential appendix prior to reaching a decision.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Brent Framework Agreement represented the best re-procurement option and it was appropriate to access Brent Council's Arboricultural Framework Agreement available to all members of the West London Alliance (WLA) to access at no charge and call-off contract. He added that the proposal would also remove the need for a separate procurement process thereby saving the Council on costs and officer time by not needing to tender the requirement

RESOLVED: That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise, in liaison with the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Community Safety and Property and Major Contracts, to enter into an Access Agreement with Brent Council for Arboricultural Services and a call-off contract under the Framework Agreement referred to in 2.1 with Gristwood and Toms Ltd for a term of 3.5 years with a possible 2-year extension.

Reason for Decision: The Council undertakes £400,000 of tree work per year to ensure the Borough's tree stock was maintained in a safe condition and to maintain levels of street tree provision. A cost effective well provisioned contractual arrangement was essential to enable the Council to fulfill its statutory obligations to maintain the Borough's trees in a safe condition.

Alternative Options considered/rejected: As set out in the officer report/Undertake an independent OJEU tender process and obtain individual Batch Quotations.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

550. Key Decision - Consultation Draft Garden Land Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Community and Environment on a consultation draft Garden Land Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to support the presumption against garden land development set out in Policy CS1 B of Harrow's Core Strategy (2012).

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration referred to the Harrow's Core Strategy, which gave a presumption against the development of garden land. Additionally, several appeal decisions had given the impression that there was uncertainty about what garden land development was. As a result, the proposed SPD before Cabinet and would help prevent incremental residential development on garden land.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications welcomed the report, including the cross-party support received for the SPD. He also congratulated the government for its involvement in this regard; however he was concerned that this matter contradicted the government's policy on green space development. He asked if the issue of green space development could be taken forward with cross-party support, together with the involvement of other London boroughs, so that there was a joined-up approach in regard to these two matters.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration stated that he had not considered taking these matters forward and given that the consultation in relation to the increase in planning fees together with extending permitted development sites had fallen short of expectations, there would be little mileage in pursuing this new issue.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the draft Garden Land Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), at Appendix A to the report, be approved for public consultation;
- (2) the views of the Local Development Framework Panel meeting held on 3 December 2012 be noted.

Reason for Decision: To progress the preparation of a SPD, as the most effective way of supporting the implementation of Harrow's new presumption against garden land development.

Alternative Options considered/rejected: As set out in the officer report / Do nothing and issue an informal guidance note.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

551. Authority's Monitoring Report

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration introduced the report, which presented the Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. The AMR monitored the effectiveness of the implementation of local planning policies and production of Harrow's new Local Plan.

The Portfolio Holder commended the report to Cabinet and drew attention to the support of the Local Development Framework Panel at its meeting on 3 December 2012.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Authority's Monitoring Report 2011/12, at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for publication on the Council's website;
- (2) the views of the Local Development Framework Panel meeting held on 3 December 2012 be noted.

Reason for Decision: To enable compliance with the requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

Alternative Options considered and rejected: As set out in the officer report.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

552. Strategic Performance Report (Q2)

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services introduced the report, which summarised Council and service performance against key measures and drew attention to areas requiring action, including how these would be addressed.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services drew attention to the financial position of the Council and how this would impact on the services provided. The Portfolio Holder referred to the cuts that were being considered and the challenging times that lay ahead.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report that performance in many areas was good when set in the context that the Council was facing significant challenges. He referred to the inward investment in relation to the development of the Kodak and Lyon Road sites, which would result in new developments in the Heart of Harrow. In addition, the Council would benefit from modernisation through technology, which would help migration with back office functions as the IT systems were archaic. Moreover, satisfaction levels

following the reablement review were high and the number of people requiring ongoing social care had gone down.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Children and Families Directorate continued to face challenges but he was confident that the staff would continue with the good work to meet those challenges.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Portfolio Holders continue working with officers to achieve improvement against identified key challenges.

Reason for Decision: To note performance against key measures and identify and assign corrective action where necessary.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

553. Key Decision - Tender for the Council's Occupational Health Service Provider

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services introduced the report setting out the process undertaken for renewing the provision of an Occupational Health and an Employee Assistance Programme for Council employees with a recommendation to enter into a new contract. Cabinet also considered a confidential appendix prior to reaching a decision on this matter.

The Portfolio Holder outlined the background to the report in the context of the announcement by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea that it would not be extending the contract with the provider as part of its framework agreement. As a result, Harrow Council had to source a new provider and would be taking the opportunity to include identified service improvements as part of its service specification.

The Portfolio Holder added that the provision of an Occupational Health Service was a key aspect of protecting the health, safety and welfare of the Council's employees and would help identify savings as part of its functions.

RESOLVED: That the Assistant Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, be authorised to enter into a Partnering Framework Agreement with the successful tenderer, for a period of up to four years, two years with an extension of another two years subject to performance review, for the provision of an Occupational Health and Employee Assistance service.

Reason for Decision: The Council's current contract for the delivery of the Occupational Health Service was due to expire in January 2013. In compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 the Council followed an open competitive tendering procedure and based on the results agreed to award the contract to the most economically advantageous tender.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

554. Half Year 2012/13 Treasury Management Activity

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report, which set out a half year summary of Treasury Management activities for 2012/13. The report made reference to the Counterparty limits and that these had been amended in October 2012.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report that the Counterparty Policy had helped the Council to raise money and that an average interest rate of 2.1% as at October 2012 placed Harrow's return into the top 10% of UK local authorities, given that bank base rates were at an all time low. More recently, the Council had approved increased flexibility to invest with the part nationalised banks, resulting in a significant contribution to the income earned this year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the half year Treasury Management Activity for 2012/13 be noted;
- (2) the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee be recommended to consider and review the report.

Reason for Decision: To promote effective financial management and comply with the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations 2003 and other relevant guidance. To note the Treasury Management activities and performance.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

555. Equality Framework for Local Government

Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive, setting out the scope of the new Equalities Framework for Local Government and how it could best be used to support the Council's continuing commitment to providing services that address the specific needs of all communities in Harrow. The Framework was based around five themes: Knowing your community; leadership, partnership and organisational commitment; community engagement and satisfaction; responsive services and customer care; and skilled and committed workforce.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services explained why the external accreditation against the Framework should be delayed, as it would involve the gathering of substantial evidence and would only provide a snapshot of progress. There was also a cost

element involved. The Portfolio Holder commended the Framework to Cabinet as a tool to measure the Council's progress and continue improvement in equalities.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the new Equalities Framework for Local Government, as a tool to measure on a continuous basis, improvements and progress in equalities in addition to the specific measures set out in the Council's Equality Objectives, be adopted;
- (2) external accreditation not be sought against the Framework.

Reason for Decision: The use of the Framework as a tool focuses on continuous improvement rather than provide a snapshot assessment.

Alternative Options considered/rejected: As set out in the report/Not to use the Framework at all.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

556. Key Decision - Revenue and Capital Monitoring for Quarter 2 as at 30 September 2012

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of resources setting out the Council's Revenue and Capital monitoring position as at 30 September 2012.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to the projected overspend but stated that the position was better than that reported for Quarter 1. However, it was important that the overspend was managed and all potential overspends would be scrutinised. To aid this, a spending protocol had been issued in November 2012 to restrain all non-essential spend thereby ensuring a measured approach to addressing the overspend.

The Portfolio Holder also highlighted the surplus on the Housing revenue Account (HRA) of £100,000 lower and a capital underspend of £14m. He commended the one off virements to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the revenue and capital forecast outturn position at the end of September 2012 be noted;
- (2) the following capital virements, detailed in paragraph 36 of the report and reproduced below, be approved:

Description	From £000	To £000
Adult Social Care Framework I project Supported Housing (HIV)	250	250
St. Ann's Road project Strategic Sites	500	500
Total	750	750

Reason for Decision: To note the forecast financial position and actions required to be taken.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

557. Key Decision - Collection Fund 2012/13

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which set out the estimated financial position on the Collection Fund as at 31 March 2013.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reported that the Council had collected more Council Tax than anticipated resulting in a surplus which would help fund the service for the following year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the estimated surplus of £1,319,071 on the Collection Fund as at 31 March 2013 of which £1,045,960 was the Harrow share be noted;
- (2) £1,045,960 be transferred to the General Fund in 2013/14.

Reason for Decision: To adhere to the Council's statutory obligation to make an estimate of the surplus or deficit on the Collection Fund by 15 January 2013, a major part of the annual budget review process.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

558. Key Decision - Fees and Charges

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report, which set out the Council's external fees and charges for the financial year 2013/14. He added

that the fees and charges could be changed in-year if Portfolio Holder consent was given.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the charging policy agreed in 2010 and the move towards a principle of full cost recovery. A minimum 4% uplift in fees and charges was proposed. He drew attention to the Commercialisation Project, which had helped to highlight the role that external income played within the Council and the taking of a strategic approach towards increasing overall income. The training given to managers on budgets was an essential ingredient of the Project together with its application to a number of high-yield services, such as trade waste, pest control and car parks.

Members' attention was drawn to cemetery fees where no increase was planned at this stage since there had been increases in previous years. Additionally, some changes in fees were subject to consultation and, where appropriate, fees and charges could be implemented from January 2013.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder clarified that, besides cemetery fees, other areas such as parking fees would also be the subject of a review.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) It be agreed that the Fees and Charges, set out in the officer report, be implemented, where appropriate, from January 2013;
- (2) the changes to cemetery fees be reviewed and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety be delegated responsibility to amend the fees as necessary.

Reason for Decision: To allow fees and charges to be set in line with costs and inflationary pressures.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: Alternative levels of fees.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

559. Key Decision - Draft Revenue Budget 2013/14 to 2016/17

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the draft revenue budget for 2013/14 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2013/14 to 2016/17 report to Cabinet and reported that the final budget would be presented to Cabinet in February 2013 prior to its submission to full Council.

The Portfolio Holder set out the context in which the report had been prepared, such as the government's austerity measures, at a time when local authorities continue to take huge cuts from the government and the historically low grant received by Harrow, particularly when compared to its neighbouring borough Brent. He added that there was a funding gap of £24m over the next two years due to demographic changes as shown in the recent census results. These were as follows:

- an increase in the number of children, resulting in a school expansion programme;
- an increase in the number of elderly people in the borough which would impact on the budget;
- cuts in welfare by the government, which would place an additional strain on the Council's budget;
- additional cuts from the government in the form of various grants, such as the Early Intervention and Children Centre grants;
- shunting of costs onto local authorities resulting from the cuts in government departments.

The Portfolio Holder outlined the challenging decisions facing the Council, which would inevitably impact on services provided. The draft budget sought to realign expenditure to key outcomes and reflected the five key principles: making savings in the Civic Centre; ensuring that the services residents cared about were protected from drastic cuts; protecting the vulnerable of Harrow; encouraging growth and investment in Harrow; and working with partners and listening to residents to make sure that the right decisions were made.

The Portfolio Holder outlined some of the actions that the Council was taking, as follows:

- making provision to invest in house building, employment programmes, more social workers, and a Harrow Help Scheme to help those affected by welfare reforms;
- some of the recommendations from the Harrow Youth Parliament would be implemented;
- a reduction in the number of senior managers from 30 to 20 was continuing and there would be a payment of a living minimum wage to staff;
- supporting partners, including the voluntary sector which had endorsed the five principles;
- supporting local businesses and district centres by delivering on regeneration investment;
- taking a commercial approach to service delivery to drive down costs, thereby protecting front line services by driving down costs associated with back office functions;
- keeping open the borough's libraries but merging the Civic Centre and the Town Centre libraries;
- invest in the Xcite Project to support people to get back to work.

Cabinet was informed that the government's welfare reforms would have a huge impact on all households and the homelessness figures were expected to increase. Moreover, since the report was written, the government had lowered its projections on growth and a further cut in the government settlement for Harrow was expected. All of these issues added to an uncertain future and he thanked all staff for their resolve and hard work.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications thanked staff in the Finance team for their work in producing the report in a timely fashion. He outlined the national picture where a large number of Councils were facing a grim future but also trying to protect essential services. The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services stated that the report provided an excellent picture of the challenges facing the Council and he welcomed the proposals for investment.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the draft budget for 2013/14 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved for consultation;
- (2) the remaining budget gaps of £5.2m in 2013/14, £3.3m in 2014/15, £16.9m in 2015/16 and £14.3m in 2016/17 and the plans to close the gap be noted;
- (3) the planned investment in services and efficiency programme be noted;
- (4) the statutory changes to school funding be noted and the proposed changes to the school funding formula at Appendix 4 to the report be approved;
- (5) the proposed level of contribution to the London Boroughs Grant Scheme of £263,831 for Harrow be agreed.

Reason for Decision: To publish a draft budget for 2013/14.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: As set out in the officer report.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

560. Harrow Partnership Board

Cabinet received an information report of the Assistant Chief Executive setting out a summary of the issues considered by the Partnership Board at their meeting on 6 December 2012.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To note the work of the Partnership.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member/Dispensation granted: None.

[Call-in does not apply to decisions that have been noted.]

561. Key Decision - Tree Maintenance Access Agreement and Contract

RESOLVED: That the appendix be noted.

Reason for Decision: To allow the appendix to be considered in conjunction with the main report at agenda item 10.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: As set out under item 10.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member / Dispensation granted: As set out under item 10.

562. Key Decision - Tender for the Council's Occupational Health Service Provider

RESOLVED: That the appendix be noted.

Reason for Decision: To allow the appendix to be considered in conjunction with the main report at agenda item 14.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: As set out under item 14.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member / Dispensation granted: As set out under item 14.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.27 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR THAYA IDAIKKADAR
Chairman

**MINUTE APPENDIX I
(TO COUNCILLOR QUESTION 10)**

**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2013-14 to 2016-17-
SAVINGS STARTING DURING 2013-14**

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
	£000	£000	£000	£000
COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING				
Hatch End Pool, Arts Centre, Museum and Bannister stadium, reduce subsidy through commercialisation and investment opportunities	-117	-238		
Additional CHW savings still being developed	-209	-1080		
Contract Management - efficiencies	-150	-100		
WLA Joint Procurement: APC Res Care 12/13 onwards	-150	-150		
Residential Care Strategic Review: JB UoR	-1,550	-3,000		
Investment in Community Based Services	775	1,500		
Day Services Strategic Review: JB UoR	-300	-300		
Community Development review of structure and service re-provision	-48	-15		
Libraries transformation 2 - savings associated with the Library Management system and review of opening hours.	-25	-71		
Cultural Strategy Review efficiencies - savings subject to tendering exercise with Ealing and Brent	-200	-400		
Total Community Health and Wellbeing	-1,974	-3854	0	0
ENVIRONMENT AND ENTERPRISE				
Introduction of Civic Centre staff car parking charges	-135	-45	0	0
Climate Change - Flexible retirement and consumables budget	-31	0	0	0
Public Realm service reduction	-673	-81	0	0
Establishing the Harrow Home Improvement Agency as a stand alone organisation. Transformation Project	-75	-75	0	0
PRISM efficiencies	-1,500	-350		
Total Environment and Enterprise	-2414	-551	0	0
RESOURCES				
Performance, Research & Analysis Business Case and New Operating Model Strategic Commissioning	-132	-97		
Deletion of Corporate Risk Management Support Service	-30	-30		
Use of Artificial Intelligence to divert switchboard calls	-60	-60		
E-cavass Project	-20	-20		
Total Resources	242	207	0	0

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
	£000	£000	£000	£000
CHILDREN & FAMILIES				
Introduction of Charging for non Stat Educ Phy	-125	-90		
Consolidation of Early Years training functions	-100	-50		
Deletion of Head of ESSO	-50	-50		
Consolidation of staffing structure - proposed deletion of 6 posts	-217	-78		
Consolidation of Clinic in a Box commission	-21	0		
Further children's centre remodelling	-173			
Existing MTFS				
Children's Centres remodelling	-200	-200		
Total of Children and Families	-886	-468	0	0
Grand Total	-5,516	-5,080	0	0