

# CABINET MINUTES

## 18 JULY 2013

<b>Chairman:</b>	* Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar	
<b>Councillors:</b>	* Nizam Ismail	* Asad Omar
	* Krishna James	* William Stoodley
	* Zarina Khalid	
<b>Non Executive Non Voting Councillors:</b>	* Susan Hall	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane
<b>In attendance: (Councillors)</b>	Kam Chana	Minute 667
	Paul Osborn	Minute 667
	David Perry	Minute 667
	Simon Williams	Minute 667

\* Denotes Member present

*[Note: The agenda order was varied to allow items of public interest to be taken prior to the remainder of the agenda. The agenda order of the substantive items was as follows: item 12 – Transformation of Day Services, item 15 – Concessionary Travel, item 10 – School Organisation, item 11 – West London Independent Fostering Agency Framework Tender, item 14 – Discretionary Housing Payment, item 13 – Adoption of Harrow’s Community Infrastructure Levy, and items 16/17 – Strategic Performance Report / Treasury Management Strategy.]*

*In addition, an announcement was made by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families in relation to the ‘good news’ received on the proposed School Expansion Programme. As it was customary for the minutes to show the formal business first, followed by any Recommendations to Council prior to the recording of general decisions being made by Cabinet, the minutes are set out in that order.]*

## 661. School Expansion

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families was proud to announce that the Department for Education had agreed to fund the expansion of 15 schools in Harrow, including a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Unit at Harrow College. She added that this was in addition to the nine schools that had already been approved for expansion.

The Portfolio Holder added that the expansion would enable the Council to provide 3,000 additional school places by 2015 to educate the increasing number of young people in Harrow's primary schools, including children with SEN in specialist schools together with specialist provision in mainstream schools. The Portfolio Holder thanked school staff and officers in the Children and Families Directorate who had been involved in submitting compelling bids to the Department of Education. The expansion would also help enrich and enhance the lives and opportunities of Harrow's children.

The Leader of the Council also thanked the Corporate Director of Children and Families and Councillors for their support.

## 662. Apologies for Absence

An apology for lateness was received on behalf of Councillor Susan Hall, who had been delayed at another meeting.

## 663. Declarations of Interest

**RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:

### Agenda Item 10 – School Organisation

During consideration of this item and upon the mention of Vaughan School, Councillor William Stoodley declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was the Chairman of the Planning Committee which had determined the recent planning application for the site. He would leave the room if the discussion became specific to Vaughan School.

### Agenda Item 13 - Adoption of Harrow's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

On behalf of Councillor Hall who had been delayed at a meeting, it was declared that she owned a business in Harrow and Wealdstone. She remained in the room to ask questions on the matter.

### Agenda Item 15 – Concessionary Travel – Changes to the Taxi Card Scheme

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was employed by London Councils Limited which administered the Taxi Card Scheme. He would remain in the room to ask questions on this matter.

## 664. Minutes

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the following amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013, be taken as read and signed as a correct record:

Minute 652, Councillor Question 1, Page 9 of the agenda, last word of line 4 to read 'reserves' instead of 'service'.

## 665. Petitions

### (1) Taxicards - Petition

Angela Dias, Harrow Association of Disabled people, presented a petition signed by 363 people with the following terms of reference:

"We, the undersigned, who are committed to the rights of disabled people to participate fully in society, call on Harrow Council to restore the taxicard allowance to 104 journeys per year for everyone who is assessed to need a taxicard."

**RESOLVED:** That the petition be received and considered with agenda item 15, Concessionary Travel – Changes to the Taxicard Scheme'.

### (2) Yellow Line Parking Restrictions – Rayners Lane - Petition

Jeremy Zeid presented a petition signed by 100 people, with the following terms of reference:

" We, the undersigned residents and businesses object to the following:

That Harrow Council is to impose more yellow line parking restrictions, without loading facilities, on the shops, services, businesses and customers of Rayners Lane and its environs. This at a time of economic uncertainty and reduced takings, borders on collective municipal insanity. The Council should make life easier, not harder.

The punitive actions will prevent businesses, deliveries, collections and customers from shopping, loading or unloading without risking a £60 welcome-to-Harrow "revenue raiser". Businesses already in difficulty will close, the rest will be badly hit. The result will be another once thriving shopping street (like Station Road), turned by a greedy, seemingly uncaring Council, into another shuttered ghost town full of betting shops, loan-sharks, pawnbrokers and closed premises and a seething, growing resentment by people at the ends of their tethers.

May WE, the taxpaying residents and businesses of Harrow remind the Council who pays for them, their employees and all of the buildings, and demand that this appalling decision be reversed immediately as any delay for "consultations" will not only cost residents and businesses dearly, but also the Council in its inevitably reduced "revenue" and increased benefits bill."

**RESOLVED:** That the petition be received and referred to the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety for consideration.

(3) The Croft, Playing Field, Pinner HA5 - Petition

A local resident presented a petition signed by 305 people, with the following terms of reference:

“ We, the undersigned, oppose the decision made to keep the gates of The Croft, Playing Field (off Cannonbury Avenue and Glover Road, Pinner, HA5) open throughout the night. Reasons for opposition: This will

- encourage anti-social behaviour, including underage drinking and the use of drugs;
- provide unlawful access to our properties without being seen or noticed, in the dark, and be targeted and burgled;
- leave home owners and their families vulnerable and fear for their safety, most of whom have young children or are elderly;
- definitely impact on the market value of our properties.

The Croft has been subject to anti-social behaviour prior to the gates being installed, hence the effort by the public and the Safer Neighbourhood Watch to fight to get them installed and closed during unsociable hours.”

**RESOLVED:** That the petition be received and referred to the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety for consideration.

**666. Public Questions**

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

1.

**Questioner:** Yvonne Lee, on behalf of Harrow Mencap

**Asked of:** Councillor Krishna James, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

**Question:** “Seemingly the outcome of the day service review is the ghettoization of people with profound and multiple disabilities in day services. How do you justify this?”

**Answer:** Thank you for the question.

I do not agree with your characterisation that it is “ghettoization” of people of Harrow and day services.

On the contrary our vision is to provide opportunities for day activities in the community as well as in specific buildings.

The proposal in the report improves opportunities for people with the highest needs to be supported in the borough, in purpose built, modern buildings, with skilled staff.

In addition, Harrow continues to be at the forefront of personalisation and will provide a range of choices for people to access alternative services with personal budgets if they wish.

The report itself includes in detail the reasons for making the proposed changes. I am sorry if you do not agree with these reasons and may I add, I do understand where you are coming from. I have read the report and understand the concerns that you have but as someone who has actually gone and visited the new facilities, I feel this is probably the way for us to go now.

**Supplemental Question:** Can you give evidence of how you have used the feedback of service users, carers, the representatives of organisations to make this decision?

**Supplemental Answer:** We have looked at the extensive report, the figures, the number of people that are attending various places and according to that, we have come to the conclusions at present. There is always time for dialogue. You know that extensive consultation was carried out. The evidence is in the report.

2.

**Questioner:** Deven Pillay, Chief Executive, Harrow Mencap

**Asked of:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council  
*[Answer provided by Councillor Krishna James, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing]*

**Question:** “How is the Council Strategically planning for services to meet the needs of Disabled People to fulfil its priority of protecting the most vulnerable in Harrow?”

**Answer:** The Council is planning in a number of ways to meet the needs of local residents. The paper we are presenting today is one of a number that officers have developed recently that cover key areas of service provision and set out our approach to change and how we plan to meet future demand.

However, the main driver for adult services in Harrow is the personalisation of adult social care. Harrow continues to pioneer approaches to personalisation, and will be launching My Community ePurse in some weeks. This will enable people to choose and purchase their services online with support from our staff. We will be publishing a Market Position Statement shortly, which will set out the way that we will work with local service providers to ensure they are able to meet the needs of local residents.

**Supplemental Question:** Over the last two to three years, there have been a number of consultations – fairer charging, freedom passes, discretionary passes, taxicards, blue badges, mental health day services, residential services, day services, taxicards again, meals on wheels, on top of Council Tax and the social fund.

All these changes on average, is every two months and has impacted on the same people, time and time again. How can you justify this as a strategic approach? To me it appears very piecemeal and I would ask, that having implemented some of these changes and about to implement these changes, are you aware of the impact in human cost on people who are disabled?

**Supplemental Answer:** If anybody on this Cabinet understands, I would as I happen to come from the same community and I have a brother who has polio. I do not take things lightly.

I have read the report thoroughly and have talked with my officers. I have visited the day centres. I somewhat agree in with you that, it is hard due to the government and different welfare reforms. I do understand.

3.

**Questioner:** Angela Dias, Harrow Association of Disabled People

**Asked of:** Councillor Krishna James, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing  
*[Answer provided by Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications, Finance, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, Property and Major Contracts]*

**Question:** “Many people in Harrow are reliant on taxicards for achieving access to the local community, and the people who are most reliant on taxicards, are often the most vulnerable people with the most complex needs. Can you please explain how making any kind of reduction to

the scheme, which will for some people mean serious social exclusion, is meeting the Council's stated priority of 'supporting and protecting people who are most in need?'"

**Answer:**

Just under 3,000 residents or approximately 1.3% of Harrow's population is reliant on the London wide Taxi Card Scheme. Harrow fully supports the continuation of the Scheme and will always lobby TfL to ensure that they continue to fund part of the London wide scheme.

Unfortunately, due to budgetary pressures, it is no longer possible for Harrow to continue to top up the grant allocated for this purpose and this has resulted in the proposed changes to reduce trips to ensure that the scheme is self funding via the TfL grant and therefore viable long term.

I note the comments regarding social exclusion and protecting the vulnerable and would add that there has been a full twelve week consultation on the subject with all scheme members. Having been sent details of options, in order to achieve the savings required, users have opted for the reduction in trips and a full impact assessment has been carried out to consider the impact to our residents. In view of this, we intend to work closely with Adult Services, contacts and the wider community to help mitigate identified impacts. In fact, we have a scheme better than most in London. These changes are going to bring the level of service very similar to other Councils.

As you may know, the Chief Executive is leading on this area for the West London Alliance which looks to create jobs and improve skills and businesses. That sort of concept can be applied in our working with the NHS. Now part of the reason this has arisen is that the NHS has not been providing the service the residents need. When residents need to go to the hospital, the transport should be provided by the NHS but they are not doing that properly so we are doing that. So, this is where I think there is room for improvement and we will keep it under review and look at the situation over time.

We also need to balance the budget.

By improving the service we can help more. You are aware that there have been a lot of complaints about the taxi service. Somebody called a taxi at 11 o'clock, it turned up at 12 o'clock and charged double, including in some instances the metres were run for the full day. We have therefore asked for a meeting with London

Councils and I have specifically asked the officers to include you in the meeting. So by working proactively, I hope we can reduce the problems. Additionally, there are unprecedented cuts from the government and we all have to share the pain.

I will just finish it by saying you are still going to get 40 trips a year.

**Supplemental Question:** Again, I would like to know what evidence you have actually got from the information and feedback given to you by service users, carers and organisations which helped you to make this decision to cut the Taxi Card?

**Cllr Idaikkadar:** The consultation led to three options. One option was to increase the basic you pay from £2.50 to £5.00 but this was rejected by a majority. They thought that the best thing was to reduce the number of trips and we agreed with that.

4.

**Questioner:** Adam Gabsi, representing Harrow Association of Disabled people

**Asked of:** Councillor Krishna James, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

**Question:** "The stated aims of the Council for clients of Adult Social Care services, are around personalisation and choice, so can you please explain how planning changes such as closing Bentley and other day centres is offering choice to people, who have made it very clear that their choice is to continue attending Bentley?"

**Answer:** Thank you for your question.

The personalisation agenda is about providing choice and control to every local adult who receives social care services. Providing choice in this way inevitably means that some people no longer choose to use Council run services.

Many people have chosen not to attend Bentley Day Centre and the numbers attending are now low. This is one of the key reasons for the service closing.

However, each of the current users of the service will have a choice of alternatives and will have the choice to move within friendship groups so that they do not lose out.



The Council must make difficult decisions in order to manage within the resources available. We do not have a choice.

**Supplemental Question:** Can you please tell us what evidence you have and how you have used the information and feedback given to you by service users, carers and representatives' organisations to make this decision?

**Supplemental Answer:** Pages 147 -160, set out how the table is worked out and attendance at each Centre.

5.

**Questioner:** Norman Stevenson

**Asked of:** Councillor Asad Omar, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety

**Question:** Park Grass-Cutting and Maintenance

I am typical of a number of residents in Pinner South who have expressed concern that Pinner Village Gardens and The Croft parks will no longer have regular grass cutting done. This will mean that these popular and regularly used parks will become wastelands – this is likely to encourage damage to the environment caused by non-indigenous plant-growth, fly-tipping and possibly even encampments such as has been seen in a neglected site in neighbouring Barnet. Do you really want to risk ruining Harrow's famous green environment and making the borough less safe?

**Answer:** Thank you for your question.

I am sorry but do not agree with you. We are not ruining Harrow's green environment.

What we have done is to reduce the specification in secondary parks to manage our parks and converting parkland to wild grassland with a relaxed mowing regime. We will continue to monitor the parks and deal with any fly-tipping and illegal encampment robustly.

Path borders, sports pitches and play areas will still be cut at the same three week frequency as they are done now so there will not be any change there and will not prevent people enjoying the park amenities.

Wildflower meadows can sometimes be viewed unfavourably, possibly due to their physical height,

inability to see the ground surface and perceived untidiness.

The mowing regime aims to create a wildflower meadow within a suburban environment which can bring a piece of peaceful and restful countryside.

**Supplemental Question:** Now the Council is aware of a 1986 archaeological report relating to Pinner Village Gardens. In there, there are medieval farm earth works, ridge and furrow which are believed to date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Since they are the closest remaining to central London, those who know about these regard them as very rare and they should be given Ancient Monument Status.

Your policy of allowing the park to become overgrown, I take the point about meadows but for that particular area to become overgrown shows a wanton disregard for the ancient heritage of Harrow, going back centuries and I have notified English Heritage of this. Will you please immediately reverse the decision?

**Supplemental Answer:** This is the decision that was taken by the Cabinet back in February and, as you know, we have classified all our parks into key parks, parkland and open spaces. Pinner Village Gardens is one of the open spaces. We have reduced some of the pruning and leaf clearance but they will be looked after as well.

## 667. Councillor Questions

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

1.

**Questioner:** Councillor Simon Williams

**Asked of:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications, Finance, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, Property and Major Contracts

**Question:** "McDonald's on Shaftesbury Circle, in my ward of Harrow on the Hill have applied for an extension to its licensed opening hours. Following representation by residents concerned at the amount of litter generated by the restaurant, a public hearing of the Licensing Panel will be held on 22nd July. Objection has also been represented by this Council's Environmental Health based, again, on the amount of litter.

Residents that have presented formal representation are only a few of the residents I spoke with concerned about the amount of litter on and around Shaftesbury Circle and the failure of McDonald's, in this instance, to adequately address the problem. Residents are often reluctant to make formal representation and sometimes find it difficult to speak out, but in my view that is what we are here to do and to speak up for our residents.

Could you advise me please if you think it acceptable for McDonald's to employ a firm of licensing agents to contact residents who have registered representation asking them to withdraw and contact the Council to say they no longer object to the application by the restaurant before the Licence Panel hearing in a few days time. Do you not agree that residents should be free from the fear of a letter from a firm of licensing agents when exercising their rights?"

**Answer:** I understand and appreciate your concerns. I thank you for representing the residents.

The use of a licensing agent would not, as such, be considered unreasonable or be a cause for concern. Many licence applicants make use of the services of agents to assist them in making applications or in preparing for hearings.

Similarly, it is not necessarily inappropriate for applicants or their agents to contact objectors to discuss these objections prior to a hearing. Legislation requires that names and addresses of objectors are available to the applicant. Often direct contact can allow the parties to gain a fuller understanding of the other's position or come to a compromise agreement which can either lead to an objection being withdrawn or assist in drawing up licence conditions. In many cases this dialogue can remove the need to hold a hearing.

It would, however, be inappropriate for either an applicant or an agent to place undue or unreasonable pressure on any objector to withdraw their objection. If any objector feels that this is happening they should contact the licensing service immediately and appropriate steps will be taken to investigate any conditions.

I have also spoken to the Licensing team late this afternoon. McDonald's employs a street warden. They have offered to widen the area they patrol and increase the frequency of it. That may lead to better clean areas

plus this administration is actively considering introducing spot fines for litter dropping. Combined together, I hope and wish we can have a cleaner Shaftesbury Avenue.

**Supplemental Question:** Thank you for that answer. It has partly answered but in the last few days I have been contacted by a number of concerned residents who have been contacted by this agency who have felt under pressure and have felt intimidated and I wonder, in light of that, if you would consider postponing the Licensing Panel on Monday until we can have the confidence that residents have a full and open opportunity to exercise their democratic right in decision-making. Also, just to be clear to some of the colleagues that do not quite understand this, that we have a wider review of Council policy in engaging with the public in the face of well resourced and powerful companies and their lobbyists?

**Supplemental Answer:** I understand your concerns but this is a legal issue. They have advertised for a hearing and there is a legal process to follow.

If the legal process is flawed or there were undue pressures put, I would suggest you send a sample letter used by the agency to the legal officer and the licensing officer and they consider whether the Licensing Panel meeting can be postponed. I as a Leader cannot interfere in the system they have. We have to go through the proper process and this is a technical matter.

2.

**Questioner:** Councillor Paul Osborn

**Asked of:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications, Finance, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, Property and Major Contracts

**Question:** "Do you believe that Councillor Graham Henson's outsourcing of the Council's IT to Capita has been a success?"

**Answer:** The decision to outsource the IT service was made following the production by PWC of an options analysis and a business case. This looked at the work that needed to be done to bring the Council's aging infrastructure and Novell operating system up to date. At the point of outsourcing over 90% of the infrastructure

was end of life, following a number of years of under investment.

The Council's infrastructure at that point was at risk of major failure and required urgent upgrade.

The Council evaluated outsourcing the service as well as delivering the changes in house.

One of the key factors leading to the decision to outsource was the perceived risk of doing the essential transformation in-house versus the opportunity to have the work done for a fixed price with the risk contractually transferred to a third party.

How has the outsource performed? Let me respond in two distinct respects:

1. The day to day activities and daily running of the service and support have been generally very successful. The challenging KPIs set by the contract have largely been met. A few problem areas have arisen from time to time, such as a delay in setting up new users in the autumn of last year but Capita have been responsive in correcting these issues. Most outages and service credits have been caused by the impact of the Transformation Programme on day to day activities. An example of this is the problems with email immediately following the move to Outlook.
2. The delivery of the Transformation Programme has been more difficult and there have been considerable delays to the completion of the programme. We are currently expecting the work to be completed by the end of November, some 19 months late. The delays are partly due to the fact that Capita took much longer than they should have to get the programme up and running and have had resourcing difficulties. They have accepted this and the Council's Chief Executive has been in discussion with Capita's Chief Executive to ensure that the delivery of this programme is of the highest priority to Capita.

However, much of the delay is due to unexpected complexities in the Harrow environment that have made the Transformation more difficult than anticipated. The risk of completion on time and to budget was transferred to Capita and therefore all cost overruns have been, and continue to be, met by them. While the impact of this on the Council's performance and reputation is a risk borne

by ourselves, the costs are borne by Capita as they are contractually committed to delivering at a fixed price.

A key part of the decision to outsource was based on the risk analysis of Harrow leading the work versus a third party leading the work. The current position demonstrates that the risk element identified by PWC was correct and indeed may have been understated.

Therefore despite the delays and difficulties the decision to outsource was I still believe a good one since the alternative would have left the Council exposed to the escalating costs resulting from the delays and the complexities of upgrading from the failing IT infrastructure that the Council had in place at the time.

Nevertheless, lessons need to be learnt and I would add that Capita's life term is coming fairly soon and the new contract is to be procured. Capita can apply if they wish to and I have already instructed officers it will be a cross party vote as part of the evaluation of all new applications.

**Supplemental Question:** First of all, we have established in the past that actually the failings started after the outsourcing rather than before the outsourcing but I would just draw your attention to the fact that the service has been so bad that according to the Revenue and Capital Outturn report that went to Cabinet last month, Capita have had to provide credits of over £500,000 and according to page 541 of the agenda for this meeting, a report in your name, Leader, it says about the IT system and the complaints "Complaints have remained high. There was a slight dip in Q2 when Transformation activity was virtually halted but throughout the year the level has been high. It is anticipated there will be further disruptions if we press ahead with the Transformation and complaints are likely to remain high".

My supplementary question is, if you regard that as a success, how exactly would you define failure?

**Supplemental Answer:** Well, I think you have got to look at the starting point. You can compare with places like Hammersmith. So if you start with a low base, there are going to be problems but I said that there are lessons to be learnt. Let us work together and get a new contract that is helpful for Harrow.

3.

**Questioner:** Councillor Kam Chana

**Asked of:** Councillor Asad Omar, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder of Environment and Community Safety

**Question:** "Could you provide an update on the Council's plans for the pavilion in the Croft Park, off Cannonbury Avenue?"

**Answer:** Thank you for your question.

As you probably know more than I do about this pavilion, it is a very sound pavilion and it was gutted some time ago following a fire. What we want to do is find a suitable partner to renovate and take up a lease on the building. We had marketed it before but as you know, Sport England objected to it because they wanted a changing room in there. What we are going to do is remarket it and hopefully an organisation or nursery will show interest and they will have changing rooms in their plans as well.

**Supplemental Question:** You mention about marketing. To market something, it needs to look desirable and the area needs to look desirable. By leaving the grass long, do you believe you will have trouble with the marketing as you are not cutting grass even once a year. For example, you will have trouble to try and market the pavilion and get suitable people in to renovate it because it has been a decade and counting? Do you believe by not cutting the grass, it will be detrimental to your marketing plans?

**Supplemental Answer:** Sorry, cutting grass is a different issue but what I would like to say is we are confident we can remarket it and what I am hoping in the next three to four weeks' time it will go on the market and hopefully someone will show an interest.

4.

**Questioner:** Councillor Kam Chana

**Asked of:** Councillor Asad Omar, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder of Environment and Community Safety

**Question:** 'Can you confirm whether your plans to start leaving Harrow's parks unlocked extend to the Croft Park?'

**Answer:** Yes they do.

**Supplemental Question:** Are you aware Richmond Council recently reversed a decision to start leaving some of its parks unlocked after resident complaints and does this give you cause for second thoughts as you press ahead with not locking Harrow parks?

**Supplemental Answer:** Thank you for your supplementary question.

As you know, this was an MTFs savings in the budget in February this year. It is only 30% of the parks which are locked and what we are doing is, we will be monitoring any anti social behaviour, any littering, any graffiti and we will be working with the SNT team and also the park users to see what we can do about it. I mean, we are not reversing this at the present time but if it needs to be, we will have to look and do it maybe in about six months' time.

5.

**Questioner:** Councillor David Perry

**Asked of:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications, Finance, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, Property and Major Contracts

**Question:** "Do you feel that the unconventional political set up currently in place with your administration is unsettling, and the residents of Harrow should have cause for concern as key services are clearly not receiving the attention they desperately need?"

Question WITHDRAWN.

6.

**Questioner:** Councillor David Perry

**Asked of:** Councillor Nizam Ismail, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services

**Question:** "At the most recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Leader of the Council mentioned your Administration will increase the support provided to the Third Sector. Therefore please could you clarify over the next 12 months what support this will be?"

**Answer:** Thank you.



Harrow Council has pledged its commitment to supporting the Third Sector through the adoption of the Third Sector Strategy in March and is now fulfilling its actions under that Strategy. We have already delivered our new three year Outcomes Based Grants Programme which will see organisations funded for three years from 2013/14. In addition, we have identified a further £90,000 which will be used over the next year to commission face to face advice services and hate crime support from the Third Sector. We have been working closely with community organisations to identify what support services they will need and how they want those services to be delivered – such as funding support, training, volunteering – and we will be funding a new CVS service (Council for Voluntary Service) from September with a specification driven by the sector and delivered locally.

In addition, the Council will be procuring services for residents from the Third Sector in Harrow. For example, Harrow is investing £350,000 over the next two years in Healthwatch, which is being delivered by a partnership of local organisations.

Harrow is also launching the Mutual Support Network this year which will be an additional investment in preventive services. We have started the process of identifying a provider by inviting organisations, including the local voluntary sector, to express an interest in delivering the concept. This will represent an investment of £450,000 including £150,000 from Harrow Strategic Partnership.

We will be working with the Sector to identify other services they can help us deliver and have invited these representatives to our Managers Forum in September to explore how we can take this forward.

**Supplemental Question:**

I think we have already seen this evening how emotive the issues facing the voluntary sector are and the people that are in need in Harrow and I think, given the attendance this evening and the passion with which they have come forward, it is even more important than ever, that as an administration yourselves, that you continue to put people first and the Third Sector definitely put people first. What I would like to ask you is, given some of the recent policy changes which you have made, which affect the environment, I think that is money which you have U-turned which could have gone into protecting more frontline services for the people that actually need them. I think it is even more difficult and I actually sympathise with yourselves at the moment

because you are in a difficult position as an administration because of the reduction of funding from the government which are putting these difficult decisions at the hands of Councillors locally. That is a fact and this is the reality of what we are having to deal with.

So my question is, will you continue to challenge any influences that you have to put forward, place over people that may come within this administration set up?

**Supplemental Answer:** As you know, I am a community oriented person and I have been here for 12 years serving the community. You rightly said, Harrow is the lowest funded Council in London.

Now to respond to these challenges, Harrow Council's Third Sector Strategy Working Together Partnership has done much to address these needs. This Strategy was sponsored by the Third Sector Forum and chaired by the Corporate Director and attended by a cross section of organisations. I too attended last week. During that meeting, the Third Sector, Harrow Council, NHS Harrow, Harrow College, Stanmore College and Job Centres were there. So as you rightly said, all those participants here were represented on that.

As you know, we have already delivered 42 main grants, sports budgets, reported an increase in membership and demand for coaching as a result of the last Olympics. These organisations supported over 15,000 beneficiaries and 1,000 volunteer workers. Thirteen organisations were awarded Edward Harvist Trust money. I am looking forward to obtaining some funds and promote this community so that all communities will join together. I have been supported in the proposal over the management of the community premises. The new Centre is expected to be opened in May 2013 and will support over 100 community organisations with flexible accommodation. My ambition is to work closely together with the Third Sector and community organisations and hold joint meetings to monitor their services and get feedback as to how best I could improve even better.

*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:*

7.

**Questioner:** Councillor David Perry

**Asked of:** Councillor Zarina Khalid, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

**Question:** "Please could you outline the detail of the new policy announcement made by the Leader of the Council, at the recent Overview and Scrutiny committee, in reference to your Portfolio, regarding your administrations intention to use vacant buildings on the Civic Centre site as 'Classrooms'?"

**Answer:** The Council is currently investigating a number of options that would deliver sufficient primary school places. Depending on the outcome from government decisions regarding funding for Marlborough and Vaughan Schools we may need to consider any other potential sites to support the re-build of both schools.

8.

**Questioner:** Councillor Margaret Davine

**Asked of:** Councillor Krishna James, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

**Question:** In the report and recommendations on the "Transformation of Day Opportunities in Harrow", which will be considered by the Cabinet tonight, the future use of Bedford House is not clear.

Will the Portfolio Holder please explain her long term plans for the future of this building and its facilities?

**Answer:** In your Cabinet paper in January in relation to residential care services you recommended the following:

"Work with the Council's Estates Department to identify a longer term option for the efficient use of Bedford House. This may include the potential sale of the building and the purchase of an alternative building which meets the needs of the long-term residents in a high quality environment."

As we have said, this Cabinet will adhere to major policy decisions made by your administration and the findings in today's report are consistent with those in January.

Subject to approval of the recommendations in the

report I will ask officers to consider whether an alternative, high quality alternative to Bedford House could be found for the permanent residents of this service.

I wish to stress that a move to this alternative must be in the interests of the residents, and enable them to maintain their friendship groups. As in today's report it and must be implemented with sensitivity and professionalism.

9.

**Questioner:** Councillor Sachin Shah

**Asked of:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications, Finance, Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, Property and Major Contracts

**Question:** "Please could you confirm whether or not you submitted a formal response in your capacity as Leader of the Council on behalf of Harrow Council, to the London-wide draft **LSP5 consultation** on the cuts to the fire service?"

**Answer:** I can confirm that I did not submit a formal response on behalf of the Council to the London-wide draft LSP5 consultation. This was because the details contained in the plan regarding Harrow include the provision of an additional appliance to be located in the Borough adding to the service's capacity to respond to emergencies locally. At the same time the Plan does not envisage changing the targets for responding to emergencies but does seek to reduce the number of fires in all categories during each year of the Plan and increase targeted preventative work, inspections and audits.

10.

**Questioner:** Councillor Kam Chana

**Asked of:** Councillor Asad Omar, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder of Environment and Community Safety

**Question:** "What is being done to fix the pot holes on Cannon Lane and in Cannonbury Avenue?"

**Answer:** All carriageways in the Borough are inspected on a periodic basis and additionally when residents bring specific concerns to the Council's attention. As a result of these inspections localised repairs are implemented

where it is considered there may be a potential hazard to either pedestrians or vehicle users.

There are one of three categories assigned to any area that the Highways inspector has identified as requiring rectification.

- 1) Urgent repairs are dealt within 2 to 24 hours depending on their likely impact on road users
- 2) Areas that although considered to require fairly prompt attention they do not present an immediate problem and are repaired within 5 working days
- 3) Other areas that do not present a hazard but fall within the Council's intervention levels are to be repaired within 3 weeks.

The clock starts from the date of the issue of the orders to the Contractor. Category 1 repairs are issued immediately they are observed by the inspector, category 2 repairs are issued the day after they are observed and category 3 repairs are issued in line with the remaining available budget. Therefore the more category 1 and 2 repairs issued the less category 3 repairs can be released. Unfortunately this does lead to a backlog.

The Highways Inspector for this area inspected Cannonbury Avenue on 17 April and observed 10 locations in the carriageway which he considered to be category 3. The orders for these have now been raised and they are programmed for completion by the end of this week. Cannon Lane is due for its next inspection in the next few days.

11.

**Questioner:** Councillor Christine Bednell

**Asked of:** Councillor Zarina Khalid, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

**Question:** 'Could you please outline your administration's plans to accommodate the increasing and pressing demand for secondary school places?'

**Answer:** The Council has an excellent track record at providing the appropriate number of school places for the children of Harrow residents without creating surplus capacity. This has been done through good work by officers and

negotiation with our Primary and Special school Headteachers and Governing Bodies. Currently there is capacity in Year 7, the first year of the secondary phase, for September 2013 and the next few years. The demand for secondary school places from the growth in pupil population is not projected to hit Year 7 until September 2016. The unknown impact of the Government's Free School programme, including, but not necessarily limited to, Avanti House also has to be factored into a future strategy.

Discussions have already started with Secondary school Headteachers about that strategy. These will continue in the autumn term and a proposed strategy will be brought to Cabinet in due course. The funding of any strategy will also need to be clarified in the light of known and future funding streams that the Council can access to provide what, by the end of this decade, will be a significant number of additional secondary places.

**668. Key Decision Schedule - July to September 2013**

**RESOLVED:** To note the contents of the Key Decision Schedule for July 2013.

**669. Progress on Scrutiny Projects**

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

**670. Harrow Partnership Board**

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which summarised the discussion at the meeting of the Partnership Board held on 27 June 2013.

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

**RECOMMENDED ITEMS**

**671. Adoption of Harrow's Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration introduced the report, which set out the outcome of the examination into Harrow's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and for Council to approve and adopt the Charging Schedule.

The Portfolio Holder explained the background to the report and explained that the CIL would allow local authorities to raise funds from developers to pay for the infrastructure that was needed as a result of their development. He added that the Council had consulted on the proposed rates and submitted its Charging Schedule for Independent Examination where it had been

concluded that the Council had taken a pragmatic approach towards setting the rates.

Cabinet Members were informed that changes to the CIL could be made by future administrations. The Portfolio Holder responded to questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members about the impact of the proposed charges on Care Homes and Use Class A1 Retail and the overall impact on small businesses at a time when the Council was looking for these to expand and create jobs for local residents. He drew attention to the conclusions reached by the Independent Examiner that the Council's decision to set the CIL rates was based on reasonable assumptions about development value and likely costs. The evidence suggested that residential and commercial development would remain viable across most of the borough, especially those parts where substantial development was planned, if the charge was applied. The Independent Examiner had concluded that the proposed charge rate would not put the overall development of the area at serious risk.

Cabinet noted that the report proposed a start date of 1 October 2013 and discussions ensued about how this could be achieved and what governance arrangements had been put in place. The Chief Executive outlined the options available to Members, and officers outlined the impact of any delay in the implementation of the start date. An agreement on how the start date would be achieved would follow after the meeting.

**Resolved to RECOMMEND:** (to Council)

That

- (1) the CIL Charging Schedule and the Instalments Policy and Regulation 123 List appended to the Schedule be adopted;
- (2) a commencement date of 1 October 2013 for the coming into effect of the CIL Charging Schedule be approved.

**Reason for Recommendation:** To provide an important mechanism for the funding of infrastructure to support the implementation of the Local Plan.

**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.

*[Call-in does not apply to this recommendation as the decision is reserved to Council.]*

## **RESOLVED ITEMS**

### **672. School Organisation**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families introduced the report, which set out school organisation issues in Harrow, including School Place

Planning, Phase 2 of the Primary School Expansion Programme, Special School SEN Placements Planning Framework, Early Years Strategy and Amalgamation Policy. The Portfolio Holder informed Cabinet that there had been a 33% rise in bulge classes and the pressures to provide extra places in schools.

An officer outlined the implications of the Department of Education's announcement to fund the expansion of 15 schools in Harrow and its relationship with the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Placement Planning Framework which, together, would help provide more opportunities for children in Harrow.

The Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Director of Children and Families responded to questions from non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members on Council policy regarding academies and consultation, projections and delegations, as follows:

- the Council had an excellent relationship with all the schools in the borough, including faith schools and academies which were autonomous. All types of schools would continue to be supported by the Portfolio Holder and the Directorate;
- robust consultation mechanisms were in place following the incorporation of the lessons learnt from the Vaughan School expansion. The money from the Department of Education would help contingencies to be put in place where planning permission for expansion was not granted to schools. The money would also help build in flexibility;
- projections made in relation to school place planning and pupil growth had been accurate and that the Council had managed to offer a place to all children whose applications had been received on time;
- there was a risk of undersupply in the school places available at both primary and secondary levels. However, appropriate measures were in place and all options would be investigated;
- delegations put in place by Cabinet in November 2012 were appropriate for application where there was a need for other schools to be identified for permanent expansion. The relevant shadow Portfolio Holders would be kept abreast of developments in this area, including the capital spend in relation to the expansion;
- a briefing note setting out the Department for Education's announcement to fund the expansion of 15 schools would be issued soon.

**RESOLVED:** That



- (1) phase 2 of the Primary School Expansion Programme be moved to the statutory process for permanent expansion, as stated in Appendix A to the report;
- (2) the Special School SEN Placements Planning Framework, at Appendix B to the report, be approved;
- (3) the Amalgamation Policy, at Appendix C to the report, be confirmed;
- (4) the progress made in developing the Harrow's Early Years Strategy be noted.

**Reason for Decision:** To fulfill the local authority's statutory duties to provide sufficient, high quality school places in its area as part of its strategic role as champion for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and of educational excellence.

**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.

### **673. West London Independent Fostering Agency Framework Tender**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families introduced the report, which set out the Framework that would allow the use of collective purchasing power of West London local authorities to deliver preferable rates of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) with additional fee reductions and discounts, including other benefits.

The Framework would

- enable the partners to effectively manage the quality and availability of placements and ensure that more local placements were made available locally;
- help deliver more efficient commissioning arrangements for Looked After Children placed with IFAs.

A non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member was concerned about the savings that would be achieved which were in the region of up to 2% only and how these compared to the unit costs of the placements. In response, the Corporate Director of Children and Families stated that the unit costs had been benchmarked and were the best in London. She added that it was important to recognise that the children in question would have complex needs.

The Chief Executive, who Chaired the West London Alliance Children's Group, confirmed that the Framework for IFA was the best in London and would provide care in a family setting. He acknowledged that whilst the initial savings were small there were opportunities for the longer term.

The same non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member asked about the break clauses and whether the Framework was the right one to join. The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families said that the Council could leave the contract at any time but that a departure of any Council would have an impact on the Framework. The Corporate Director of Children and Families added that the prices would vary and that other Councils had shown an interest in joining the Framework. Moreover, there were a wide range of providers which could drive costs down even further. In conclusion, she explained that the process of fostering Looked After Children who often had complex needs was expensive.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the process taken by officers in entering into a Framework Agreement with the West London Independent Fostering Agency Framework headed by the London Borough of Hillingdon for a period of up to four years be noted;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Children and Families, in consultation with Portfolio Holder of Children, Schools and Families, to enter into the West London Independent Fostering Agency Framework for the provision of independent foster carers.

**Reason for Decision:** To enter into the Framework Agreement with other boroughs and delegating authority.

**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.

#### **674. Transformation of Day Opportunities in Harrow**

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing introduced the report, which set out the conclusions of the consultation, including further work that had taken place, on a new Model of Day Opportunities in Harrow following Cabinet's decision in January 2013. The report sought approval for transforming Day Opportunities in Harrow.

The Portfolio Holder added that the consultation had engaged with approximately 650 people and it was important to make the changes for the following reasons:

- to ensure that the services provided were used effectively and levels of underuse addressed;
- that the Council was responding appropriately to the demographic changes;
- the need to respond to the personalisation agenda which gives people a choice of services to use;

- the need to support those most in need by ensuring they can access the services provided by the Council.

The Portfolio Holder appreciated that the proposals would entail change which would concern some users and she was sad about this but felt that service provision would improve as a result of the proposals. She added that the situation would continue to be handled with the utmost sensitivity and trust, as there was a great deal of work to be done to bring the proposals to fruition. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was thorough and explained how the Council would mitigate adverse impacts.

The Portfolio Holder added that the process had been put in train by her predecessor and that she had seen some of the benefits that would ensue as a result of the proposals. However, the process was not complete and discussions would continue and she empathised with the disabled movement, with whom the ongoing work would continue.

The Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing referred to the report, which set out many benefits of the proposals alongside some challenges. He added that the proposals would also allow some disabled people to return to Harrow and use services near their families.

An officer detailed the feedback received from various organisations and users and explained that the recommendations set out in the report allowed for the same level of service to be provided to users. The officer added that the Council was committed to working with users to identify their requirements, such as friendship groups which many users wanted retained. He added that it was essential that there was choice but where there were preferences, the Council would aim to support them. In addition, service users would help design facilities, such as the provision of gym(s) within the buildings.

The Non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members asked why the original proposals to Cabinet were not being revisited by the new administration.

In response to some comments about the use of Bentley Day Centre, the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing stated that whilst he could not comment on individual cases, the process culminating into the report before Cabinet had commenced in January 2013 when Cabinet authorised consultations, and he confirmed that substantial changes had been made to the original suggestions. There was a need to balance choice with financial considerations. The Corporate Director added that the report was silent on the future of some of the Day Centre buildings and further opportunities to learn and share would be available through the Steering Group which would continue to exist as part of this process. In responding to questions, the Leader of the Council confirmed that an interest in a site had been received; however the Council had continued to focus on the needs of service users which had 'driven' the proposals before Cabinet.

The Chief Executive referred to the extensive consultations carried out, including the outcomes which had been shared widely and detailed in the

report. He added that the Council was under immense financial pressure and all service areas were being asked to identify savings. It was essential that the Council focussed on the most vulnerable and he confirmed that existing service users would not have a reduction in their service. The proposals were underpinned by the issue of personalised budgets thereby giving choice to users and there was a need to integrate health and social care budgets. The proposals were intended to provide a better service in an adverse financial climate.

The Portfolio Holder said that she was aware it was a transitional period and was disappointed with the number of processes that had arrived at the same time. She was of the view that it was an opportune time for all sections of the community to come together to ensure successful outcomes. She was confident that the EqlAs had been undertaken and were thorough but further discussions would be required on the overall implementation of the proposals.

In response to additional questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members about the utilisation of the Bentley Neighbourhood Resource Centre and its capacity which ought to be exploited, an officer replied that there was a need to manage within available resources and the building was not sustainable in its present form. The officer added that the matching of staff to jobs as part of the proposals would be carried out and he expected a much lower level of redundancies than the 11 identified, due to redeployment opportunities that would be made available to staff affected by the proposals and people choosing retirement.

In conclusion, the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing explained the implications of not going ahead with the proposals as they would impact on the young people arriving through the transition process and those who were using services outside the borough as they would not be able to receive services in Harrow near their families. He added that the EqlA had been vigorous and thorough, extensive consultations had taken place on the proposals and there were opportunities for mitigation measures to be put in place.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) a new service model, which incorporated a focus on internal services for those with the highest needs, provided in specialist environments and in which people with lower needs would be supported by alternative providers in the community, be agreed;

### **Phase One: Reducing & Rationalising Buildings**

During Phase One, the Council would make operational changes to services to tackle the current over provision of spaces and offer best value for money. This would deliver required Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings during 2013/14 whilst moving towards the proposed service model.

During this phase the Council would reduce the number of Council buildings used by in-house services from seven to four. Capacity at

Sancroft Hall would also be utilised as the Council moved to this approach. Current vacancy levels in all five facilities would ensure that the Council could continue to offer high quality day opportunities as it transitioned to the new model.

The Council would support service users to maintain friendship and peer groups, which consultation had demonstrated to be important to them. Services provided would be at the current level, and of a similar type. The Council would commence planning for comprehensive reviews of individual needs to take place in Phase Two.

### **Phase Two: Longer Term Changes to Delivery in NRCs**

During Phase Two we would implement changes to deliver the new day opportunities model. This will include the development of specialised services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community.

Phase Two would involve changes over a period of time, including individual assessment and support planning to help people to identify the most appropriate service for their needs.

- (2) the transformation of individual services during Phase Two of implementation, as described below, be approved:

**A: Byron Neighbourhood Resource Centre** - A specialised service would be provided for people with a learning disability including challenging behaviour and Autism;

**B: Kenmore Neighbourhood Resource Centre** - A specialised service would be provided for people with Complex Physical and/or Sensory Disabilities;

**C: Vaughan Neighbourhood Resource Centre** - A specialised service would be provided for people with a learning disability and complex needs;

**D: Milmans Neighbourhood Resource Centre** - A specialised service would be provided for older people including people with dementia;

- (3) the Council cease to use the following buildings for day opportunities for vulnerable people:

**Bentley Neighbourhood Resource Centre** – the Council would consider alternative use or potential disposal of this property.

**Gordon Avenue** – Officers would negotiate with the owner of the property in relation to changing/ending use.

**Bedford House** – The building would continue to be used as a permanent residential care home for ten people with a learning

disability as approved by Cabinet in March 2013. The Council would consider the future use of this building;

- (4) the Capital Programme be amended so that this resource could be made available for capital works which arise from this review, and the recent review of Residential Care services. This would rename the capital project for "Bentley Day Centre Remodelling and Refurbishment" to "Remodelling and Refurbishment of Adult Services Residential Care and Day Care Services";
- (5) the further development of a marketplace of community-based services for people with personal budgets delivered through the Council's on-line market place – My Community ePurse – be noted;
- (6) the further development of integrated services, offering a greater range of health related services and therapies within the four designated Neighbourhood Centres and other community facilities, as part of the new responsive model of day opportunities, be noted.

**Reason for Decision:** The development of this new model of day opportunities for vulnerable people in Harrow would

- deliver a model in which services were strategically aligned and financially affordable for the future;
- ensure that the London Borough of Harrow was using its resources to support those most in need in safe and high quality services;
- deliver revenue savings of £300,000 in 2013/14 and £300,000 in 2014/15;
- ensure that we use the buildings available to us in the most effective and efficient ways;
- support greater integration of health and social care services in order to develop improved seamless, preventative services, for example, using centres for physiotherapy and health education;
- respond to the changing demographic profile of people who use day opportunities, for example, by providing services that were able to respond to young people with severe autism and challenging behaviour support staff.

**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.

## 675. Discretionary Housing Payment

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which set out the changes to the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy in light of increased funding from the government in response to the welfare reforms. The changes would provide additional housing payments to support those residents on low incomes and who were in receipt of housing benefit but where the residents were also being affected by the government cuts to their benefits.

Cabinet Members were informed that in order to mitigate the impact of the welfare reforms, the Council had received extra Discretionary Housing Payment Grant (DHP) to help those residents in financial hardship with 'housing costs'. The Portfolio Holder for Housing contributed by saying that, this year, Harrow had £1.2million to support households, a 400% increase on last year, and had consulted widely with Housing Associations, the Voluntary Sector, the Council's Housing and Children's Services to ensure that policy and key criteria were developed to effectively award the money to those most in need.

Discretionary Housing Payments were part of a range of measures the Council was offering as part of its Harrow Help Scheme, to support those hit by benefit changes, alongside an Emergency Relief scheme, a Hardship Fund and Xcite Funding.

The Divisional Director of Collections and Housing Benefits clarified that the recipients of the Discretionary Housing Payment would be those people who were in receipt of housing benefit and that the Policy would target those affected. In response to a further question from a non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member, the Divisional Director stated that the legislation restricted the use of the funds to the provision of financial assistance for the purposes of 'housing costs' and other claimants could not qualify for Discretionary Housing Payment. Any unspent money would have to be returned to the Department for Work and Pensions.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy for 2013/14, as recommended by officers, be agreed and adopted;
- (2) the policy remain in place for future years unless a substantial change in legislation or funding results in a need for review;
- (3) the Policy be reviewed in any event after a period of three years if it remained unchanged.

**Reason for Decision:** The Discretionary Housing Payment policy had incorporated feedback from consultation with internal services, the public and voluntary agencies. It had been shaped to target £1.2m between those households identified as in greatest need following the implementation of welfare reforms to Housing Benefits.

**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.

#### **676. Concessionary Travel - Changes to the Taxicard Scheme**

Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which set out proposed changes to the Taxicard Scheme as a result of the need to make savings to balance the Council's budget for the next financial year. The report showed how feedback from the consultation had shaped the changes put forward.

The Leader of the Council, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Finance, stated that it was with a 'heavy heart' that he was introducing this report, which had been due to the need to eliminate a budget gap. However, the Council had to make difficult decisions and the proposal to reduce the Taxi Card scheme trip to 40 for all Members with effect from October 2013 was being proposed to make a saving of £200,000.

The Leader added that a comprehensive consultation exercise had been undertaken and the feedback received had been carefully analysed. The consultation had provided three options:

- an increase in the contribution to £5.00 for every individual trip a member of the Taxicard scheme took representing an increase of £2.50;
- a reduction in all trips to 40 a year;
- a combination of the two options above.

It was noted that users had, overwhelmingly, chosen the option of having the trips reduced to 40. The Leader added that he was mindful of the impact of the proposals, as he was aware that there were approximately 450 users who currently had been allocated 104 trips per annum, rather than the usual 52 because they had no other travel concessions, who might be severely affected by the introduction of these changes mid-year when they may already have used more than the new allowance of 40 trips by the time of implementation. As a result, he proposed an additional recommendation, which was duly seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration, which would provide transitional arrangements for users.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the consultation had also brought to attention the many failings with the existing providers and it was intended to lobby London Councils in this regard. A meeting date had been agreed where Officers, Members and representatives from Harrow Association of Disabled (HAD) people would put forward the findings with a view to ensuring a better service or the procurement of different contractors in the future.



In response to questions from the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Community Safety and Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, the Leader agreed that the role of the NHS in this area needed to be investigated through the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board. The Leader also responded to additional questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members about the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) which he was satisfied with, including that the consultation, which had received a high number of responses, had been thorough and inclusive. He added that the Council needed to save money and a way of achieving this was by providing efficient services. A non-voting non-Executive Member was pleased with the mitigation measures being proposed.

An officer informed Cabinet that a clear mandate for Option 2 had been received as a result of the consultation undertaken. In order to mitigate the impact a transition scheme had been proposed by the Leader. He added that the consultation had provided 'rich' data which would be used at the meeting with London Councils. The report also set out answers given to specific comments received during the consultation.

The Divisional Director informed Members that Harrow had the highest number of users and the highest numbers that received Discretionary Freedom Passes.

Having moved a further recommendation to help mitigate the impact of the proposals, it was

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the scheme changes as recommended by officers in the body of the report, namely the adoption of Option (2), a maximum of 40 trips per annum for all users with effect from 1 October 2013 be agreed;
- (2) the scheduled review of all existing members during 2013/14 be noted;
- (3) it be noted that officers would be liaising with London Councils regarding the issues raised by users and HAD regarding the operation of the Taxicard Scheme;
- (4) the implementation of additional trips on top of the new scheme allowance for the period 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014 to support phasing from current scheme into new scheme be agreed; however
  - (i) for those users who were previously allocated 104 trips, an additional allocation of 20 trips for the year 2013/14 only for the period 1 October 2013 until 31 March 2014, be agreed so long as no more than 52 trips had been used by 30 September 2014, otherwise scheme holders would be given the balance of 72 trips minus their trip usage to 30 September 2013;
  - (ii) for those users who were previously allocated 52 trips, an additional allocation of 20 trips for the year 2013/14 only for the period 1 October 2013 until 31 March 2014, so long as no more

than 26 trips had been used by 30 September 2013, otherwise scheme holders would be given the balance of 46 trips minus their trip usage to 30 September 2013.

- (5) resolution (4) above would provide transitional arrangements and would ensure that all scheme members had at least some trips for the rest of the year and specifically to use during the winter months when bad weather and lack of transport facilities could lead to unnecessary isolation.

**Reason for Decision:** The changes proposed to the Taxicard Scheme had been shaped as a result of feedback from a wide consultation with residents and users of the Taxicard Scheme. Feedback from the consultation had influenced both the proposals that have been put to Cabinet for consideration and the Equality Impact Assessment showing the impacts of these changes.

To implement the changes to the Taxicard on 1 October 2013 and provide transitional arrangements.

**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.

#### **677. Strategic Performance Report (Q4)**

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources summarising Council and service performance against key measures, including areas requiring attention.

The Leader of the Council, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, reflected on the past year and highlighted some of the key aspects of the report, as follows:

- the end of year financial position was favourable, with a net underspend of nearly £1m after transfers to various reserves;
- Adult Services had seen more successful Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of services, a positive expert review of safeguarding, national recognition for the quality assurance system and strong performance on key indicators, especially on personalisation where the Council was a national leader;
- the school expansion programme would address increases in the primary school population, with an additional 17 reception classes opening in September 2013. A process for looking at permanent expansions would start in the autumn. Meanwhile Ofsted inspection judgments of overall effectiveness showed Harrow schools as significantly better than both London and England figures;

- Harrow was one of only 11 boroughs to exceed GLA growth expectations significantly and successfully achieved its 40% affordable homes target. Proactive planning had seen a further £1bn of new development granted permission during the year;
- inward investment opportunities had been pursued and Harrow was one of only two Councils represented at inception of the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Kingdom and India for strengthening partnerships in urban regeneration;
- 10 apprenticeships and 60 work placements had been facilitated by the Council and 182 supported into work through the Xcite Scheme. Approximately, 1,009 people had attended job fairs that the Council had organised. In the face of the economic challenges that the country faced, the Council's efforts to help get people back to work was of real importance. Additionally, the Council continued to lobby for improvements in the performance of the DWP Work Programme;
- work had started on public realm improvements such as in St Ann's Road and Lowlands Park;
- the take up of online MyHarrow account had exceeded expectations, with 31,000 in place at the end of March, enabling Harrow residents to access a range of Council services on line at their convenience;
- the performance in containing levels of homelessness was outstanding, and the best in London, but the Council was not complacent;
- the majority of the Priority Actions were on track at year end.

The non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members asked about the challenges faced by the Children and Families Directorate in relation to the Workforce Strategy, including why the workforce in this service area suffered from a high turnover, and the improvement plans proposed for the Youth Offending Service. The same Members were concerned about decision-making and the need to have a true picture of the situation to ensure effective decision-making.

The Corporate Director of Children and Families responded as follows:

- that there had been a high turnover of staff in Children's Services but regular meetings were held with staff to identify problems and the issue of recruitment together with the instability of an agency workforce was being addressed;
- that, whilst she was not complacent, the challenges around the management in the Directorate had moved forward. There had been growth in the overall establishment of Children's Services and the Directorate was over the establishment to meet demand, which had been agreed by the Chief Executive;

- that the Chief Executive had personally been involved in the discussions with the Youth Offending Service and an Improvement Plan was being implemented. There was room for improvement in this area. The Chief Executive confirmed that frank discussions had taken place with staff in the Youth Offending Service;
- the Local Safeguarding Children Board was now chaired by an Independent person and, having started from a low base, improvements had been made in this area but there was still a need for further improvement;
- the key areas of concern related to the education of Children Looked After where Improvement Plans had been drawn up, domestic violence prevention and the Youth Offending Team where there were 'cultural' issues and quality of work produced needed improving;
- the quality assurance role had been greatly strengthened in the last three years.

The Corporate Director of Children and Families updated Cabinet and expressed her concern about the veracity, quality and reliability of past reporting of where the services were and reassured Members that a more intensive regime of quality assurance was now in place with improved quality assurance by the LSCB. She highlighted how there had always been very good quality performance data but that it had not given a sufficient view of the quality of the case work.

In conclusion, the Corporate Director of Children and Families stated that, whilst there were some variables, there had been an overall improvement in the quality of the workforce, the management team was stronger and that the Directorate was moving in the right direction but there was room for improvement.

The Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise responded to questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members in relation to their questions on the shortcomings of the clean and green agenda where priorities were below target. She explained that there were many factors contributing to a drop in recycling. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings and reductions in weight of recyclable packaging were contributors. With regard to street and environmental cleanliness, the MTFS savings were a contributing factor together with areas where the Council had no control over, such as private land. Additionally, the number of graffiti vans had been reduced as it was considered unproductive to have two vans. Moreover, much of the graffiti was on private land.

The Corporate Director added that recycling figures had gone down as household waste and newspaper print had reduced, the latter of which had been as a result of an increase in the use of online facilities and the reduction in the number of pages printed. She outlined that there were proposals to establish the posts of recycling officer(s). In relation to Neighbourhood Champions (NCs), a target of 2,000 volunteers had been set and that the

Council currently had 919 trained active NCs. A successful conference had been held in July 2012.

The non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member enquired about the amount of money received from Capita in relation to the PRISM. In response, the Corporate Director replied that these matters, including performance issues, were being addressed proactively.

The Corporate Director of Resources and the Chief Executive responded to questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members on the Mobile and Flexible Working project, including how many staff were working flexibly, including senior officers and the proportion of time of the working week they spent away from the Civic Centre. The responses were as follows:

- whilst individuals within a team were mobile and flexible working, no team had yet rolled out towards Mobile and Flexible Working;
- that staff required the technology to work in this fashion and the project would enable staff to spend more time in the community, such as social workers. The project would enable office space to be chosen in an effective manner thereby allowing the Civic Centre site to be used efficiently. Moreover, it was envisaged that a direct benefit was an increase in productivity of up to 8 hours;
- that it was for the individual to use their time effectively and ensure that the job was completed. The place from where the individual was working from and the visibility of staff were not essentially the key criteria. However, all staff were held to account for delivering on their respective work areas. The Chief Executive added that he met with senior officers on a regular basis and as part of the formal appraisal process.

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

**Reason for Decision:** To enable Cabinet to be informed of performance against key measures and to 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.

#### **678. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2012/13**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, which set out the summary of Treasury Management Activities for 2012/13. The report explained that Treasury Management was the management of the Council's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and debt transactions together with the effective control of the risks associated with those activities. The Local

Government Act 2003 required local authorities to produce an annual treasury report reviewing treasury management activities and the prudential and treasury indicators.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) the outturn position for Treasury Management activities for 2012/13 be noted;
- (2) the report be referred to the Governance, Audit and Risk Management Committee for review.

**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 keep Cabinet Members informed of 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.

*[Call-in does not apply, as the decision was for noting only.]*

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 9.59 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR THAYA IDAIKKADAR  
Chairman