

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SPECIAL) MINUTES

20 JANUARY 2015

Chair:	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
Councillors:	* Ghazanfar Ali * Richard Almond * Jeff Anderson Sue Anderson James Bond * Michael Borio	* Kam Chana Keith Ferry Chris Mote * Paul Osborn * Kiran Ramchandani
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) † Mrs A Khan
Non-voting Co-opted:	* Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
In attendance (Councillors)	Sue Anderson James Bond Keith Ferry Barry Macleod-Cullinane	Minute 60, 61 Minute 59 Minute 59 Minute 62

- * Denotes Member present
- † Denotes apologies received

56. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance.

57. Members' Right to Speak

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 4.1, the following Councillors, who were not Members of the Committee, be allowed to speak on the agenda items indicated:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Agenda Item</u>
James Bond	3a
Barry Macleod-Cullinane	5

58. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 4 – Petition – Harrow Museum

Councillor Sue Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a 'Friend of Harrow Museum'. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Chris Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a 'Friend of Harrow Museum'. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Janet Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a 'Friend of Harrow Museum'. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a 'Friend of Harrow Museum'. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

RESOLVED ITEMS

59. Reference from Cabinet - 16 October 2014 - Petition on Cambridge Road Car Park

Members received a reference from Cabinet in relation to a petition which requested that the Council consider a change to the status at Cambridge Road car park from 'District' to 'Local' and a change in the charge for the first hour from 80p to 20p.

A Member introduced the petition, which had the support of all the Headstone North ward councillors, and described the impact of car park charges on local businesses and residents. She stated that local business owners had reported a significant loss in business. A promised free hour of parking had not materialised with the failure of a major supermarket to locate in the area, and this fact, together with the loss of banking facilities, suggested that a 'local' designation was more appropriate. She proposed that a pilot scheme be introduced at a cheaper rate, to be evaluated and monitored over a suitable period.

The Service Manager, Traffic & Highway Network Management, described the 5 planning area designations (4 of which existed in Harrow) and explained

that the rationale for aligning the parking charges structure to the planning designations had been to set charges consistently to reflect the retail provision and demand in an area. Amending a planning designation would require changes to a number of statutory documents and would be difficult to justify.

The Portfolio Holder for Business, Planning and Regeneration, concurred with the Service Manager, adding that there were criteria governing the designations, and it was not an easy matter to change these. It would also be necessary to consider the impact on neighbouring areas of any proposed changes. He commented that a case could be made for a trial programme to support regeneration.

Members considered whether aligning parking policy to planning area designations allowed sufficient flexibility to respond to community and business needs, and what measures were available to address residents' and traders' concerns. The Service Manager noted that the worst rates for shop vacancies had occurred during a period of free parking. He explained that there was little evidence that concessionary parking charges supported local businesses, and that improvements in vacancy rates in recent years had resulted from targeted initiatives by the Economic Development team. He believed that linking charges to the planning designations was a fair system as it treated similar retail centres equally, and noted that prior to the reform of the charges structure there had been over 30 different charging schemes. He advised careful consideration for determining how one local centre might take priority over another of a similar type.

The Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise reminded the committee that the proposed change would need the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Environment, and observed that it would be wise to monitor demand and vacancy rates for another quarter before introducing the change.

A Member stated that the proposal for a trial period at a lower rate, to be monitored and evaluated over a defined period, had cross-party support.

The Chair concluded that it would be appropriate to suggest to Cabinet that consideration be given to the introduction of a lower charge for the first hour for a trial period.

RESOLVED: That the following conclusion be referred to Cabinet:

That consideration be given to the introduction of a lower charge for the first hour of parking in the Cambridge Road Car Park for a trial period, and that economic activity and shop vacancy rates be monitored during this period.

60. Reference from Council - 13 November 2014 - Petitions on Harrow Arts Centre

Members received a reference from Council in respect of two petitions objecting to the Council's proposal to close Harrow Arts Centre; one from the

Hatch End Association containing approximately 6000 signatures, and the second from U3A containing approximately 5300 signatures..

The Chair invited the Lead Petitioner for Hatch End Association, Claire Goldschmidt, to read the terms of the petition. She added two further points, namely that the Arts Centre provided a community centre for all ages, abilities and interest groups, and that proposals for the future of the Arts Centre should encompass the entire campus.

The Lead Petitioner for the University of the Third Age, Anne Gerrard then read the terms of the second petition, and posed a number of questions:

- when would the business plan for the Arts Centre be finalised ?
- would lottery funding be available ?
- if no viable plan for the future of the Arts Centre could be found, could it continue at another venue ?

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement and the Divisional Director of Community and Culture responded and explained that a business plan was being prepared on which stakeholders would be consulted. Depending on the options put forward, either a draft or final business plan would be taken to Cabinet for decision in April. Once a project was agreed, lottery funding could be sought. It was not possible to say whether another venue would be available; the draft Regeneration Strategy would look at all Council assets, but no decision had been made in respect of properties.

A Member stated that any preferred options could have lengthy lead-in times and early progress would be necessary to save the resource within the available timescales.

A Member noted that the Arts Centre had high usage by older age groups and he queried whether the loss of the resource would impact on other services and increase costs elsewhere, thereby cancelling out any savings. The Divisional Director replied that viable alternative options for user groups were being considered, and that this would be addressed in the Equality Impact Assessment.

A Member stated that the Arts Centre provided a valuable service and it was important to generate income and keep the resource open. He asked if other authorities had faced similar problems and found a viable solution.

The Chair thanked the petitioners for their contribution and said the Committee would await further developments with interest.

RESOLVED: That the petition and proposed actions be noted.

61. Petition - Harrow Museum

A Member presented a petition containing over 1,400 signatures, which had been received via the Council's 'Take Part' consultation programme. As the petition contained over 1000 signatures, it had come to the committee for consideration.

The Petition stated:

We, the undersigned

- are concerned by the proposals put forward by the Council's Labour administration to close Harrow Museum at Headstone Manor. We believe that the museum plays a vital role in preserving local history, providing educational resources and attracting exciting exhibitions.
- petition the administration against closing Harrow Museum.

The Member added that since receipt of the petition, the Council had deferred closure of the Museum, and she expressed her thanks for this.

The Divisional Director, Community & Culture, informed the committee that a bid for lottery funding had been submitted, and a decision was expected in March.

RESOLVED: That the petition and the deferred closure of the Harrow Museum be noted.

62. Cabinet's Response to the Council Tax Scheme Challenge Panel Report

The Committee received the response from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Review of the Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Report.

The Chair of the Review Group expressed his thanks to Members and officers who had taken part in the review, which he believed had shown the scrutiny operation at its best, particularly in considering the potential impact of a decision prior to its implementation, and in its constructive cross-party approach. He urged committee members to read the report and its recommendations before consideration of the matter at Council on Thursday.

A Member thanked the Chair of the Challenge Panel and expressed his own concerns that elements of the proposed scheme would prove a disincentive to employment. He did not feel that the cabinet response addressed the issues raised.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet response to the Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Panel be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.12 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chair