

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

AGENDA

DATE: Tuesday 16 February 2016

TIME: 7.30 pm

VENUE: Committee Rooms 1 & 2,
Harrow Civic Centre

MEMBERSHIP (Quorum 4)

Chair: Councillor Jerry Miles

Councillors:

Ghazanfar Ali
Jeff Anderson
Michael Borio
Primesh Patel

Richard Almond
Marilyn Ashton
Chris Mote
Paul Osborn (VC)

Representatives of Voluntary Aided Sector: Mrs J Rammelt/Reverend P Reece
Representatives of Parent Governors: 2 Vacancies

(Note: Where there is a matter relating to the Council's education functions, the "church" and parent governor representatives have attendance, speaking and voting rights. They are entitled to speak but not vote on any other matter.)

Representative of Harrow Youth Parliament

Reserve Members:

1. Aneka Shah
2. Mrs Chika Amadi
3. Phillip O'Dell
4. Antonio Weiss
5. Jo Dooley

1. Stephen Wright
2. Lynda Seymour
3. Barry Macleod-Cullinane
4. Susan Hall

Contact: Vishal Seegoolam, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 020 8424 1883 E-mail: vishal.seegoolam@harrow.gov.uk

AGENDA - PART I

1. ATTENDANCE BY RESERVE MEMBERS

To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.

Reserve Members may attend meetings:-

- (i) to take the place of an ordinary Member for whom they are a reserve;
- (ii) where the ordinary Member will be absent for the whole of the meeting; and
- (iii) the meeting notes at the start of the meeting at the item 'Reserves' that the Reserve Member is or will be attending as a reserve;
- (iv) if a Reserve Member whose intention to attend has been noted arrives after the commencement of the meeting, then that Reserve Member can only act as a Member from the start of the next item of business on the agenda after his/her arrival.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from:

- (a) all Members of the Committee;
- (b) all other Members present.

3. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 26)

That the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 17 November 2015 and the special meeting on 26 January 2016 be taken as read and signed as correct records.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS *

To receive any public questions received in accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 17 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

Questions will be asked in the order notice of them was received and there be a time limit of 15 minutes.

[The deadline for receipt of public questions is 3.00 pm, Thursday 11 February 2016. Questions should be sent to publicquestions@harrow.gov.uk

No person may submit more than one question].

5. PETITIONS

To receive petitions (if any) submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

6. REFERENCES FROM COUNCIL/CABINET

(if any).

7. EVENTS POLICY (To Follow)

Report of the Corporate Director – Community.

8. CORPORATE PLAN (To Follow)

Report of the Corporate Director – Resources and Commercial.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Which the Chairman has decided is urgent and cannot otherwise be dealt with.

AGENDA - PART II - NIL

*** DATA PROTECTION ACT NOTICE**

The Council will audio record item 4 (Public Questions) and will place the audio recording on the Council's website, which will be accessible to all.

[**Note:** The questions and answers will not be reproduced in the minutes.]

Deadline for questions	3.00 pm on Thursday 11 February 2016
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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

17 NOVEMBER 2015

Chair:	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
Councillors:	* Ghazanfar Ali	† Michael Borio
	* Richard Almond	* Jo Dooley (5)
	* Jeff Anderson	* Chris Mote
	* Marilyn Ashton	* Paul Osborn
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
	* Mrs J Rammelt	
	Reverend P Reece	
Non-voting Co-opted:	* Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	
In attendance: (Councillors)	Simon Brown	Minute 127
	Graham Henson	Minutes 128 and 129
	Kiran Ramchandani	Minute 126
	Stephen Wright	Minute 126

* Denotes Member present
 (5) Denote category of Reserve Members

121. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Primesh Patel

Councillor Jo Dooley

122. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 8 – School Expansion Programme

Councillor Richard Almond declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a governor at St Teresa's Catholic Primary School and Nursery. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Jeff Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a governor at Kingsley High School. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Marilyn Ashton declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a governor at Park High School. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Jo Dooley declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a governor at Rooks Heath College for Business and Enterprise. She would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Councillor Paul Osborn declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a governor at Norbury School. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

Agenda Item 10 – Events Policy

Councillor Chris Mote declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he did have some involvement in organising events in open spaces and parks. He would remain in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

123. Minutes

Councillor Almond proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2015 be amended as follows:

- On page 94, a fifth bullet point be inserted to read:

The Portfolio Holder for Business, Planning and Regeneration would be developing a commercial property strategy and a paper would go to Cabinet by December 2015.

- On page 96, the 5th paragraph be amended to read:

The Portfolio Holder for Business, Planning and Regeneration would expect the sum to be - if all time scales were met - £10 - £15million by 2020. The exact figures were not available at this meeting but this figure was the minimum that was expected to be achieved by 2018/19. Further details on the breakdown of how this would be achieved would be available in the draft budget in December.

- On page 96, replace final paragraph with:

The Council will carry out a trial and if it got more money from car parking than it would from housing the car park would remain as it is.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendments agreed above.

124. Public Questions and Petitions

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

125. References from Council/Cabinet

There were none.

RESOLVED ITEMS

126. Project Minerva Update

The Committee received a report which set out progress on Project Minerva since it was last presented to the Committee in December 2014.

The Committee agreed that Councillor Wright could speak and ask questions on this item.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources and Policy Development introduced the item and explained that there were currently financial pressures facing the Council. As a result significant savings had to be achieved. As a result it was important to be more efficient and build partnerships. This theme had been a key aspect of Project Minerva. A lot of hard work had taken place on this Project resulting in an organisation which was better able to deliver the future financial savings required.

The following questions were made by Members and responded to accordingly:

- Could further explanation be provided on the anticipated savings expected from Project Minerva.

The original savings identified under the internal option from Project Minerva totalled £2 million. This figure excluded the savings expected from the ICT procurement.

- In relation to the continued progress for a shared service partner for Human Resources and Development, it was important to recognise that although the same software might be utilised between the relevant Councils, they were normally structured differently. How confident were the Council that the systems would integrate?

This issue was recognised and was currently being investigated. It was important to note however that the Business Case for this proposal was primarily based of making efficiencies through shared management and staff.

- Were there any other Local Authorities sharing services for Human Resources?

There were shared services currently between the London Boroughs of Havering and Newham. The London Boroughs of Sutton and Merton had a shared Director of HR and it was understood that proposals for shared services were being discussed between the London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth. It was important to recognise that different Local Authorities had different needs.

- What did the term 'SAP' stand for?

It was understood that this was the name of the product rather than an acronym. The term 'ERP' referred to Enterprise Resource Planning.

- It was referred to in the report that the training and development specification for managers and HR staff was over ambitious. Was this lesson learnt before Project Minerva or before it had commenced?

This lesson had been learnt during the implementation of Project Minerva.

- It was referred to in the report that performance pressures in Housing Benefits concerning processing times and that the situation was being monitored. Who was doing this monitoring?

Extra work had been created relating to Housing Benefits as a result of increased automation with the Department for Work and Pensions. The amount of resource required had been estimated and work was already under way on clearing the backlog which had accumulated. Consideration would be given as to whether this amount of resource would be sustainable in the longer term.

- Would lessons learnt during Project Minerva be considered and acted upon?

Lessons were learnt and were always acted upon. The Divisional Director Commercial, Contracts and Procurement was a member of the Minerva Programme Board and any improvements required to the procurement process would be picked up.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the results achieved from Project Minerva be noted;
- (2) it be noted that the total programme spend was £70,000 under the original budget.

127. School Expansion Programme

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the School Expansion Programme and related matters including procurement for the next phase of the schools capital programme delivery.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Young People introduced the report and explained that Phase 1 of the Programme for Primary Schools had been completed. Phase 2 of the Programme was currently underway. This involved 29 different projects. All of the schools had opened on time in September apart from 4 schools which had been delayed by 2 working days.

The Portfolio Holder also explained that there had been issues with the main contractor who had delivered the building works required under the Programme. As a result of the lessons learnt from these issues, Phase 3 of the Programme would include a more robust contract with contractors that the Council could rely upon and enforce.

In relation to the Secondary School Expansion Programme, details of this had been provided in the report. It was also expected that the possible introduction of free schools in the borough would help the provision of Secondary School places.

The Corporate Director of People acknowledged the amount of work put into the Programme by Headteachers, staff and site managers.

The following questions were made by Members of the Committee and responded to accordingly:

- It was important that free schools provided a good level of education for pupils who attended these schools.

This was a good point and it was fair to say that the jury was still out on whether free schools provided just as good an education as state schools.

- There were concerns that the use of bulge classes to deal with an increased population?

The use of bulge classes was only introduced where there no certainty on population estimates. This meant that building works were not delivered where the extra capacity would then not be required later on. Where bulge classes were introduced, this was always done in conjunction with the school concerned.

- It had to be recognised that the borough had committed to undergoing regeneration in a number of areas. As a result this would place pressure on school places and it was important that a plan was in place to address this. In light of this Academies were working well and provided the schools with more freedom to take decisions.

The most important thing to consider was that the school provided good education for its pupils. There was a difference of opinion on whether Academies provided Headteachers with greater powers than state schools. In terms of populations projections the Council worked with the Greater London Authority to estimate this going forwards. The Council always retained flexibility to ensure that it could deal with any future demands.

- There was an organisation who wished to open a free school in Harrow. However they had encountered difficulties in identifying an appropriate site. Were the Council doing anything to help them?

The role of the Council was to facilitate the opening of a free school as far as possible if they were approached directly.

- There were concerns that building works at Kingsley High School were not fit for purpose and dangerous for the pupils.

The issues with Kingsley High School were acknowledged. There were no penalties that could be enforced by the Council under the contract but there were general legal obligations that could be pursued.

It had to be recognised that at the time the Council entered into the agreement with its building contractor, the financial climate was different. It also had to be recognised that the majority of the works under the Programme had been successful. The lessons learnt would be incorporated into the contracts for Phase 3 of the Programme.

- Were there and quality and design issues for the works conducted under the Programme?

There were a few quality issues which had come to light. There were contractual discussions taking place with the contractors on these. Ultimately if variations had taken place to which the Council had not agreed then the Council would not pay for it. The Council had already commenced the process of taking legal advice and it was anticipated that these discussions would be concluded by February 2016.

- How confident were the Council that variances between building works expected would be avoided?

The Council would be using an NIC form of content, which was more robust and provide greater security for the Council.

- What did the Council do regarding under performing schools? Additionally how were gifted and exceptional students encouraged to do well?

Schools in Harrow performed exceptionally well and did not by definition have an under performing school. The Council had a School Improvement Partnership which monitored the performance of different groups within schools and looked at all of their performances and improvement measures. All of the Academies in Harrow had bought this service from the Council.

- What did the appointment of EC Harris as Technical Advisers bring to the Council that we did not have beforehand?

The Council required additional technical services. Having put this out to tender EC Harris offered the best value for money.

- In relation to SEP 1 schools, what was happening in relation to the outstanding delays on the Programme?

The Council were seeking a resolution of the outstanding work issues. The Council did not wish for the building contractor to pull off site as this was likely to create further delays. However a loss and expense claim against the building contractor was being investigated.

- When was the Council expecting a surplus of Year 7 pupils?

It was expected that numbers would break even up until 2018, then after that there would be a significant increase.

- How had road safety and traffic issues been looked at when assessing the expansion proposals?

These issues had been taken seriously when developing proposals. Meetings had taken place and consultation with local residents. The Council were always looking at how it could alleviate traffic issues. Traffic was always a sensitive issue but it had to be realised that if schools did not expand, children who lived close to schools would not be able to attend them and would have to attend schools further away.

- There was a big difference in the original pre-feasibility estimated project cost and the latest forecast / agreed price for SEP Phase 1 for Marlborough Primary School. What was the reason for this?

The reason for this was the framework for the building costs used by the Education Funding Agency had meant that better prices were being achieved.

- There were concerns if the former Wickes building was identified as a site for the free school. There was a high volume of traffic and not much pavement space.

The Council were only aware of locations for free schools if they were asked for advice or assistance. There was no requirement for them to inform the Council prior to identifying a site. However if there were issues relating to a particular site, these would be identified and considered when planning permission was sought for a change of use for the building.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

128. Revised Policies under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005

The Committee received a report which enclosed the revised proposed policies under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005.

The Environmental Services Manager introduced the report and explained that the 2 policies were being presented to the Committee for comment before being sent to the Full Council for approval. He reported that the Licensing Policy had been amended to reflect changes in legislation including the requirements of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Live Music Act 2012.

The Gambling Policy had also been amended as per new guidance from the Gambling Commission. On consultation of this Policy, 3 representations had been received by Coral, Power Leisure and William Hill.

The following questions were made by Members of the Committee and responded to accordingly:

- What was a Citizen Card supported by the Home Office as referred to in the Licensing Policy? Also it had to be taken into account that official ID cards issued by HM Forces were provided to those who were 17 years old. This therefore could not be used as proof of being above the age limit for the sale of alcohol?

More information on what a Citizen's Card was would be obtained. More information would also be obtained on the official ID cards issued by HM forces.

- If a Temporary Event Notice related to an event in a park, how would the Council be able to ascertain if less than 500 people were attending the relevant event?

There would be entrances and barriers to any relevant event. This would help segregate those attending the event to other park users. This would make it easier to ascertain numbers and control licensable activities.

- Had there been any issues raised by Councillors in relation to the operation of the Gambling Policy across Harrow previously?

No, although other issues had been raised by other Responsible Authorise including the Police.

- Other than in the Town Centre, were there other slot machines in the borough and how were they monitored?

There were other slot machines in the borough. These were visited regularly and worked closely with the Police.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

129. Events Policy

The Vice-Chair introduced the item which had been presented to Cabinet on 15 October 2015. The Vice-Chair explained that he had asked for the item to be on the agenda as there were a number of concerns in relation to the proposed Events Policy.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Crime and Community Safety addressed the Committee and explained that the Policy was currently in the event of being consulted on. The consultation would end on 31 December 2015.

The Portfolio Holder reported that there was currently no policy covering events taking place within the borough. When events were held these were usually based on informal arrangements with Council officers. However there had been an increase in the number of events within the borough and there was also a need to look after Council owned land. As a result an Events Policy was required to provide a greater amount of clarity and understanding. This Policy would also ensure adherence to other relevant legislation and other Council policies.

The Portfolio Holder also reported that the Policy would also ensure effective forward planning and management of events and would enhance the borough's reputation.

The Portfolio Holder also stated that consultation on the policy was now taking place with residents, park users, local community groups, responsible authorities, Portfolio Holders and Directors. Once the consultation process had concluded, a report would be taken to Cabinet in February 2016 for determination.

The Vice-Chair responded that the introduction of a Policy was welcomed. However there was a significant issue to address in which events would be

exempt from the proposed charges. There were no specific exemptions mentioned which could be interpreted to mean that events like Remembrance Sunday would also be subject to a fee being paid to the Council. Other events that could be affected were political rallies which were specifically mentioned as not being accepted as an 'event' for the purpose of the policy. It was important that successful events were supported and not penalised financially just to hold the event.

The Policy and Performance Manager responded by stating that the Events Policy would list those events which would be exempt from the proposed charges following consultation. In relation to political rallies, what had been proposed in the Policy was in line with other boroughs across West London and political rallies or petitions against the Council were by their nature not 'events' for the purpose of the policy and hence would not be subject to the rules of the policy. Additionally the level of discounts applied to community and free events was subject to the outcome of the consultation so it would be considered if this was at an appropriate level.

The following questions were made by Members of the Committee and responded to accordingly:

- There were concerns at the level of discount being applied at that it would mean that events could not be run as they would not be financially viable. This had the risk of damaging community cohesion if events had to be cancelled.

The level of discount would be considered as part of the consultation.

- If any damage caused meant that the organiser of the event was liable this could result in unfair situations where other people had caused the relevant damage and the organiser was being held liable.

In the example referred to, the insurance policy held by the event organiser would cover any damage caused. This is why the Council would insist that all events were fully insured.

- There were concerns that in relation to events held in Pinner, these would be subject to charges which did not recognise the good work conducted by local residents in holding an event which was very well attended. These would then make the events nearly impossible to run.

The intention of the Council was not to stop well run events but simply to be fairer and transparent. It was acknowledged that more dialogue may be required regarding charges, exceptions and discounts and this would take place during the consultation process. It should also be noted that small gatherings, family picnics in the park etc were not considered 'events' for the purpose of the policy.

- It was important to recognise that many events, including those in Pinner already had risk assessments, insurance and a good infrastructure. Now organisations were being asked to pay for things

that they were already doing. There were concerns that this would prevent events from taking place.

These issues were all part of the discussion required around charges, exemptions and discounts.

- If the Policy was implemented and later found to be preventing events from taking place, would the Council review the Policy?

The policy would be reviewed in light of developing practice, guidance and changing legislation as necessary and in any event every two years. At the time of review, consultation would take place with appropriate parties. Ultimately, it had to be noted that there was a cost to the council when events were held and, due to the difficult financial circumstances, the Council needed to look to recover costs for services and officer time.

The Vice-Chair proposed that in light of the concerns regarding charges, exemptions and discounts and the outcome of the consultation, a report be presented to a meeting of the Committee in February 2016 prior to it being sent to Cabinet for determination.

RESOLVED: That a report on the Events Policy be presented to the meeting of the Committee in February 2016.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.58 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chair

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SPECIAL) MINUTES

26 JANUARY 2016

Chair:	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
Councillors:	* Richard Almond * Mrs Chika Amadi (2) * Jeff Anderson * Michael Borio * Susan Hall (4)	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane (3) * Paul Osborn * Primesh Patel
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors)
Non-voting Co-opted:	Harrow Youth Parliament Representative	

* Denotes Member present
(2), (3) and (4) Denote category of Reserve Members

130. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

Ordinary Member

Councillor Ghazanfar Ali
Councillor Marilyn Ashton
Councillor Chris Mote

Reserve Member

Councillor Mrs Chika Amadi
Councillor Susan Hall
Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

131. Declarations of Interest

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

132. Question and Answer Session with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on the Budget 2016/17

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to the meeting.

The Leader of the Council gave an introduction and explained that for the first time the Council had set a 3 year budget. This had been a difficult process as the Council had to find savings of approximately £31 million over the next 12 months and identify a further £52 million of savings for the further years. It was expected that by the end of the three years the Council would have made a 59% reduction in the amount it spent on its controllable budget.

There were also other considerable challenges facing the Council which were adding further pressure on its resources. This included a rise in homelessness and changes to children's social care which had incurred further expense for the Council.

The Leader reported that despite the financial pressures, there were a number of positive things to highlight. Firstly the Council were working differently by embracing shared services and working more collaboratively both locally and regionally. As part of the Commercialisation Strategy adopted by the Council, it was expected that this would generate £15 million for it. The income generated by the Council would go towards building a better Harrow.

The Chief Executive also addressed the Committee and reported that in addition to the reductions in RSG facing the Council it was also important to note that Harrow had an ageing population with residents living longer but with more complex needs – more children coming into care and a significant increase in Homelessness all adding to our costs. The Local Government financial settlement had been tough especially in the first year 2016/17 and it was believed that outer London boroughs such as Harrow had seen a bigger impact than inner London Boroughs. The 135 proposals contained within the budget had been developed through a robust commissioning panel process. The regeneration and commercialisation agendas would be key priorities and opportunities for the Council moving forward.

Members asked a series of questions to the Leader and Chief Executive and received responses as follows:

There is concern that wages which are related to regeneration projects are being capitalised. Officers have confirmed that this issue has not been

included on the Council's risk register and there are concerns that if regeneration projects go ahead these wages will have to be paid out of the Council's general account.

The Leader responded that there were regulations that were required to be adhered to on whether the wages could be capitalised or not. Ultimately this would be determined by accounting professionals. The specific figures relating to these relevant wages would be circulated to members of the Committee separately.

The Chief Executive commented that it was not unusual to capitalise wages against Regeneration Projects and the relevant regulations would be adhered to. This was an area that the Council's external auditor inspected on a yearly basis and they would need to be satisfied on this aspect. If regeneration projects did not come to fruition and the wages had to be decapitalised there was a Business Risk Reserve Fund which the Council could use to deal with any costs incurred.

How are the Council engaging residents on its Regeneration proposals?

The Leader responded that the Council had introduced a Residents Regeneration Panel. The panel had already met 2 or 3 times and had generated good discussions on general issues relating to place shaping.

The residents who were part of the panel represented various parts of the borough. Feedback received from these members of the Panel was that the Panel was well received and allowed for other localised consultation to also take place.

The Council has secured funding for the regeneration of Wealdstone. What specific projects will take place?

The Leader responded that the Council would always bid for any opportunity where it could secure external funding for projects unless it was not in the borough's interests. Money was being spent on creating a housing zone, helping business start up in Wealdstone and further investment in public realm. It was important to recognise that Wealdstone was one of the most deprived areas in Harrow and required investment.

Given the reduction in the number of Overview and Scrutiny Meetings and given that no non-executive Councillors can speak at Cabinet meetings, how do you envisage that the current administration will be scrutinised? Are there any proposals to reduce the number of Members on Cabinet?

The Leader responded that due to the financial pressures facing the Council, all options had to be explored which had included reducing the number of formal Committee meetings. There were other democratic processes that Councillors could use to scrutinise the Cabinet and meetings such as these were very productive in allowing issues to be raised directly with the Leader.

If there were ideas and suggestions on how things could be done differently, these would be considered.

The Leader also commented that the number of Members on Cabinet was an issue that only he could solely determine in accordance with the relevant legislation, and he would always consult with his political group. It was important to recognise that were there key pressures and key projects taking place within the Council, it was important to ensure that there was a Portfolio Holder responsible to provide political direction if required.

What actions were the Council taking to prevent fly tipping and cleanliness in the borough?

The Leader responded that the administration had pledged to introduce on the spot fines which had been successfully implemented. There were also more frequent litter pick ups. Other social issues had also been addressed such as making Landlords and tenants more responsible of their relevant properties and surrounding areas.

The Leader has announced that the Council had proposed a 3 year budget. What are the distinctions from last year's budget to the one currently proposed?

The Leader responded by stating that this was a 3 year budget. The figures to be achieved for the next financial year were more certain. In a 3 year budget there could never be any certainty as to whether a proposal in the last year would definitely proceed as various local and national issues could change impacting on the decision to be made. However the proposals listed in the draft budget were based on careful consideration, officer input, and the direction and projections which it was believed were best for the Council. A 3 year budget provided officers with clarity on the political direction and a direction of travel.

There were some business cases for some of the larger projects and some had been done externally and had provided approximate figures for financial savings.

The Chief Executive clarified that any proposals developed for the next financial year were always more certain compared to the following 2 years. Further business cases could develop later on and circumstances could change. It was better to describe any savings identified in Year 2 or 3 as proposals which could change, develop or evolve.

The average price of purchasing a house in Harrow is now £500k. How can nurses, social workers etc. afford to live in Harrow and what progress is being made on building more affordable homes in Harrow?

The issue of the current average house prices was a problem across London and not just unique to Harrow. One of the ways to try and address this issue was to intervene in the property market and build more houses. The Regeneration project for Harrow would generate thousands of new homes.

What was the cost to the Council of the increasing impact of the increase of homelessness in the borough?

The Leader reported that the current forecast predicted that the cost to the Council would be in the region of £4 million. There were a number of issues contributing to the costs which included the current cost of living, the Council's low housing stock and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. These reasons explained why the Council were very keen to build more affordable homes.

The Chief Executive reported that at the start of this financial year there were 153 homeless people in Harrow and at the end of the financial year it is predicted there will be 312 homeless people. The figure would have doubled. This was placing a huge burden on the Council's finances and it was difficult to predict at this stage when the homelessness figures would stop increasing.

Additionally the Council were trying to use temporary accommodation as best as it could, trying to build new homes and utilise every bit of land available. Interestingly it had been demonstrated that the costs associated with preventing homelessness by getting residents into work were much less than the resultant bed and breakfast cost if the family became homeless. This was an area that the Council would be focusing on.

Will the Council be taking up the 2% social care precept offered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer last year? The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Major Contracts has confirmed that the Council will be and if so it must be published for consultation.

The Leader responded that no decision had been reached on this and any details would be published when the final budget was proposed. Information on this would then be circulated. The Leader commented that this offer was a budget cost shunt onto Local Government. Councils nationally had been trying to persuade the Government that the financial resources provide for social care was not adequate

What progress has been made in securing a fairer grant for Harrow from Central Government?

Firstly, as had been alluded to previously, the Council were pursuing any external funding available provided it was in the borough's best interests. Secondly the Council were looking to build up better relationships with Central Government and the Greater London Authority. The Council had been proactively demonstrating to them that it had an excellent track record in delivering projects and wanted to further work collaboratively. This approach had been well received by Central Government.

The Chief Executive reported that both the Leader and he had met the Local Government Minister to provide further information on Harrow's case for a fairer grant. In terms of funding Harrow was ranked 26th out of 32 London boroughs and 105th out of 120 authorities nationally. At this meeting they also discussed how Outer London boroughs were worse off comparatively than Inner London boroughs and the impact to the Council of changes to Business Rates collection. The discussions were constructive and the Minister had

been impressed with the Council's house building proposals and asked to hear more at subsequent meeting

What are the Leader's thoughts on the Voluntary Sector review that is currently taking place? There has been a lack of information provided to the voluntary sector on the scope of the review and which members are involved on it. It is important to recognise that the Voluntary Sector provides valuable services to residents and if they cease operating the Council will have to run services themselves, sometimes at a higher cost to it.

The Leader responded by stating that he fundamentally disagreed with the question asked. A large part of the budget for the voluntary sector had been protected under the draft budget proposals. Various representatives from the voluntary sector had attended meetings of the review and had commented on how positive it had been. The review had terms of reference and member and officer input. Information would be circulated separately on the voluntary sector organisations that had sent representatives to review meetings.

Has fixed penalty notices in relation to littering been successful and effective and what level of reduction in littering has been seen as a result?

There had been a noticeable improvement in the levels of littering in the Town Centre and across the borough. In addition to this park user groups had been taking more responsibility in dealing with littering in parks. The Council were looking to roll this out to other user groups.

What does the Leader consider the current Inflation Rate to be? In the Labour Group Manifesto they have pledged not to increase Council Tax above the rate of inflation.

The Leader responded by stating that when the Manifesto was produced it was difficult to foresee future events which may have impacted upon the administration's political decisions. However Local Government generally was in an unprecedented era and the Council were providing value for money for the services that it provided.

The Independent Healthcare Commission has reported its findings on healthcare services in North West London. What are the Leader's thoughts on this?

The Leader responded by stating that the report had made damaging findings which included a lack of planning, poor consultation in London and poor value for money to name a few. The report had been prepared by Michael Mansfield QC who was well respected and Harrow along with other authorities had written to the Secretary of State for the Shaping a Healthier Future Programme to be halted.

The cap on care which was introduced by the Care Act has now been pushed back to 2020. However authorities have asked that the Government continues to provide the implementation funding for it to be put into social care. Has any response been received by the Council?

The Leader responded by stating that no response had yet been received. There had been an inadequate amount of funding provided by central government on adult social care. This applied not only to the Council but also to the Clinical Commissioning Groups. This lack of funding had big impacts for residents.

The Chief Executive commented that nationally the ageing population and adult social care cost added £700 million worth of cost to Local Government every year. Better joined up working was required in providing health and social care to achieve the best outcomes for residents. It was preferred that individuals had a single budget relating to their needs. This would ensure that individuals get better care and better value for money.

A previous Challenge Panel has proposed radical reforms in relation to the budget setting process by introducing outcome based budgeting. These reforms have been endorsed by the Chair of the Challenge Panel and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Major Projects. To what extent has this been taken into consideration when preparing the current draft budget?

The Leader responded by stating that all proposals in the draft budget produced outcomes. The draft budget had a number of proposals contained within it which delivered positive outcomes including supporting vulnerable people. He was confident that the Chair of the Challenge Panel would be happy with the proposals contained within the draft budget.

Given the impacts of funding cuts across the Council, could an update be provided on the progress of the commercialisation strategy? Was HB Public Law looking to share services with any other authorities?

The Commercialisation Strategy was progressing well. Recently the Council had been interacting with global companies on introducing an e-purse system for residents. This would be a major project and deliver enormous benefits to residents.

The Chief Executive commented that Commercialisation was a big opportunity for the Council and would provide new income streams to the Council. £15 million had already been identified in income opportunities. It would also provide a more positive agenda for staff within the Council.

The Chief Executive also reported that HB Public Law was looking to expand and operate legal services for some other authorities. Negotiations were still ongoing. HB Public Law's expansion allowed it to provide a greater range of services and more resilience within the department.

How are the Council dealing with the reduction in the projected amounts of business rates received by the Council, particularly in light of the regeneration programme and termination of the Review Support Grant?

The Leader responded by stating that It was fair to say that Harrow did not have big business parks, lots of space or a capacity to offer lots of office space in comparison to other London authorities. This was an ongoing

challenge and was part of the reasons why representations had been made for a fairer settlement grant from Central Government for Harrow.

The Chief Executive reported that the Regeneration programme was a big opportunity for the Council to attract businesses to operate within the borough thereby creating extra income through business rates for the Council and also increasing employment opportunities within the borough.

The Government has reduced rents by 1% under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). What concerns were there regarding the vitality of the HRA over its lifetime? The draft budget indicated that the Council was not doing enough to attract businesses from operating in the borough. How robust was the budgeting and contingency process?

The Leader responded by stating that there would be implications for the borough. It was important that the Council spoke to Central Government to make its position clear.

The Chief Executive commented that the HRA undertook additional borrowing to build new homes and conduct pro-active repairs to the Housing stock. This approach had been supported by tenants. The changes to rent levels had now meant that the building of new homes that were much needed and pro-active repairs could not take place as initially envisaged. The HRA was now required to look at progressing schemes in a different way and the Council would be making representations to Central Government on the implications.

What actions were the Council taking to protect the safeguarding of vulnerable children? Had anyone been prosecuted for performing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Harrow

The Council always placed families at the heart of what it did. The Council had done a lot of work in preventing any type of grooming activity and had employed an officer to deal with FGM.

The Council did a lot of awareness campaigns. The Council had only recently achieved a prosecution in relation to child sexual exploitation.

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive for their attendance and responding to the questions raised.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at Time Not Specified).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JERRY MILES
Chair

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