

CABINET MINUTES

22 JANUARY 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

Councillors:

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

In attendance:	Susan Hall	Minute 567
(Councillors)	Barry Macleod-Cullinane	Minute 567
	Paul Osborn	Minute 567

* Denotes Member present

563. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interest was declared:

Agenda Item 9 – Response to Scrutiny Review of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Self Financing

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had participated in the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget (HRA) and that he was employed by London Councils Ltd., which had lobbied on the HRA ceiling that Harrow was receiving. He remained in the room and, in his capacity as Chairman of the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget (HRA), participated in the discussion on this matter.

564. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2012, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

565. Petitions

Grant to Harrow Young Musicians - Petition

Dr Shah, a local resident, presented a petition, signed by 1,890 people, with the following terms of reference:

“Harrow Young Musicians (HYM) organises musical activities for young people who live in and around Harrow. It has gained an enviable reputation for music making to a high level in a lively and friendly atmosphere.

Harrow Council is currently considering a proposal to withdraw, completely, the grant to HYM.

Without funding, HYM will cease to exist, or at least, as we know it. The Music School has always stood by the idea that its opportunities should be available to as many young people as possible, regardless of expense. If it were to remain open after losing the grant, the marked increase in fees necessary to sustain HYM would destroy the whole ethos that it has worked so hard to build with the obvious benefits of such a scheme this is an ethos Harrow itself should be whole-heartedly endorsing.

HYM is not just a place to play incredible music. It is a place to make some great friends and share wonderful experiences. HYM is a truly remarkable organisation; it is a community of students, teachers, helpers, parents. It is an organisation that has benefited the wider community, and it would be a travesty to let it close.”

The petition asked "Please sign the petition if you do not agree with the proposed funding cut to HYM by Harrow Council."

Dr Shah informed Cabinet that additional signatures would be sent to the clerk in due course. She also presented comments received from those who had signed the petition.

RESOLVED: That the petition be received and referred to the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing and the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services.

566. Public Questions

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

1.

Questioner: Mr Welby

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

Question: Can the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration kindly explain how my evidence has been altered and

items been omitted in the Local Development Plan for Harrow? I have checked this and the evidence you have sent to the Planning Inspectorate does not show in any documents I have sent the Council.

Answer: Thank you.

Council officers received Mr Welby's letter that was addressed to Councillor Hall and dated 28 August on 18 September, after it was forwarded on from Councillor Hall. The letter has two main parts to it. The first is dealing with budget matters that are outside of the Local Plans team's remit. The second is with regards to the Planning Policy Documents that the Council were consulting on at that time.

The Council has undertaken a number of previous rounds of consultation in preparing these documents. This specific consultation into the planning documents requires respondents to focus on the statutory "test of soundness" of the documents, as required by the Planning Act.

Part of Mr Welby's representations related to financial matters addressed to officers outside of the Planning service. The remainder of Mr Welby's letter did not address the test of soundness but made comments on specific proposals within the site allocations DPD. Officers nevertheless exercised discretion in this case and gave consideration to the relevant parts of Mr Welby's representations. The table containing all of these representations received summarises Mr Welby's views on these specific policy matters and the Council's response.

Mr Welby's original unedited letter (including all the matters not relevant to the consultation) has been forwarded to the Planning Inspector and forms part of the Local Plan Evidence Library (Document 20 - pages 142-144) which is available online and by request at the Duty Planner's office.

This is the only 'formal' consultation response the Local Plan team has received from Mr Welby on the Pre-Submission Development Plan Documents. The Council has received formal requests from Mr Welby for hard copies of documents associated with the examination process and these have been promptly supplied at no cost to Mr Welby.

Supplemental Question: This is not the whole picture about my document that was sent in because on the document I received from

the Council it says that I agreed with the Local Development Plan. I did not agree with the Development Plan. There appears to be a distortion of the evidence that I sent to the Council.

I have made an official complaint to the Council and the Planning Inspectorate; that my evidence was changed and items were left out. For example, the main piece of evidence that was left out concerning site plans regards to Ballards Mews, Hills Yard in Edgware, was that no emergency access was possible to enter that site due to the entrance of that site and that was left out of the evidence that was sent to the Planning Inspector and the Inquiry.

Supplemental Answer: Can I give everybody an undertaking to meet with Mr Welby and an officer of our Policy Team and investigate the matter. If we have omitted anything or we have distorted what you said, I will make sure that the Planning Inspector knows about it next Monday/Wednesday.

[Note: Due to their similarity, public questions 2 and 3 below were grouped together.]

2.

Questioner: J Cohen

Asked of: Councillor David Perry, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services

Question: Re: Grant for Harrow Young Musicians

I understand that there is a very limited pot of money for the arts in Harrow. I am sure that you all agree that the money should go to where there is a year round commitment to all inclusive, multi cultural non elitist music making.

Maybe I could compare spending on a regular Saturday music school where I believe the present grant is £58,000 to a one off event as the Under One Sky whose grant is, I believe, £25,000. So my question is if that quote includes policing and transport costs, what is the total cost of the Under One Sky to the Council?

Harrow Young Musicians has been a flagship for the borough for fifty years. Please don't be the Council responsible for its demise.

3.

Questioner: Lindsay Davies

Asked of: Councillor David Perry, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services

Question: How does the Council justify funding 'Under One Sky', a single project, for £25,000, while withdrawing, part way through the academic year, the annual grant to HYM of £58,000.

Answer to Questions 2 & 3: Thank you for your questions and I know there is a lot of interest in this issue.

I will answer the cost and then I will answer the justification.

Under One Sky Festival in 2013 will be a cost to the Council of £25,000. In order to hold such a large community event, the total cost is higher; however, as with previous years, the small charge to attend on entry, a small charge for stallholders and sponsorship money, all allow this flagship event to take place.

In previous years there has been no charge from the local Police in Harrow, which you referenced, and the Police in Harrow assist this event. Their reason for this support is because the local Police recognise that Under One Sky is a family event and considerably helps with community cohesion in Harrow.

To respond to the question raised regarding the justification of Under One Sky, this community event had over 9,000 attendees in 2011. The event which is held all day sees representatives of community organisations, voluntary sector groups, charities, sports clubs, local business, faith groups, local schools, local performers and people young and old, all coming together to celebrate in Harrow.

The community also uses this family event to hand out literature and promote their various services to a wider audience. Due to the extremely challenging financial situation where the current government have cut local authority funding, along with the failing to provide funding support to the demographic changes in Harrow, all Council budgets are having to be reviewed. All these pressures, as mentioned, have led to a funding gap of millions of pounds.

Harrow Young Musicians will be meeting with senior officers and I this week to discuss the draft budget proposal and to see what assistance can be provided from our own Music Service and the recently launched Harrow Education Music Hub.

Harrow Council is committed to working with Harrow Young Musicians through these difficult times and that is why I am meeting with Harrow Young Musicians' representatives this week personally and for us both to work together in the interests of the young people who benefit from this organisation.

Supplemental I think that is a very fair answer. We do not have
Mr Cohen anything against Under One Sky but it is an example.

Supplemental There is a responsibility on this Council if any reduction
Cllr Perry in funding occurs. We take that responsibility to help in every way we can, to help any group who may be in trouble because of the actions we take, to see them through to give them any assistance we can.

Supplemental The issue from Harrow Young Musicians' viewpoint is
Question 3: largely to do with our year not coinciding with the
Lindsay Council's financial year.
Davies

So if, as of April the grant was to be terminated completely then a lot of our students will have paid an annual amount in September. We face that immediate shortfall before we can recover the shortfall in the forthcoming April term for example.

I just wanted to make you aware that that is the most important issue as far as we are concerned in the short term. Obviously, we can do things to make additional funding opportunities for us, as you have suggested, through the meeting that we will be having later this week.

Supplemental The concerns you raise are very valid and that is why I
Answer: am committed to meeting with yourselves and to go
Cllr Perry through those issues.

There is, I believe, various ways in which we can help. We will not have a big discussion this evening but hopefully in the days to come we will. So we can both have an honest dialogue and make sure that Harrow Young Musicians is alive and thriving for long into the future.

567. Councillor Questions

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

1.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

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

Question: Could you provide an itemised breakdown of the savings contained in the £350,000 'returning parks to open space' item in the draft budget?

Answer: Thank you.

The full and final details behind these savings have not been determined yet as they will need to undertake wider research and consultation following the Council approval of the budget.

Supplemental Question: Can you just give us a clue as to what it might contain? £350k is an awful lot of money.

Supplemental Answer: Yes, I am quite happy to share the following:

- review of parks and open spaces may mean that only the full maintenance of major parks will occur throughout the borough;
- there may be a change of regime for all remaining parks and open spaces to minimum standards;
- there may be facilitation to encourage user groups to take part in the management of parks and open spaces;

there may also be a need to remove some horticultural features from parks thus returning them to meadow and wild grassland.

2.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance
[Answered by Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts]

Question: Could you confirm which properties the Council is looking to dispose of to raise £12 million and £10 million respectively in 2013-14 and 2014-15 - as detailed on p.162 of the Cabinet papers?

Answer: These are very commercially sensitive questions but however, I will give you a couple of examples. Like the Stanmore and Anmer Lodge sites, Honeypot Lane Clinic, Enterprise House, the list goes.

What I can offer is to meet you privately and give you the full answer. That way the inconvenience of a lot of people can be minimised.

Supplemental Question: Can you confirm that you are not looking to get rid of the Gayton Road site?

Supplemental Answer: I cannot say yes and I cannot say no. You know that the planning permission for Gayton Road has expired. They have applied to extend that. Until I see a written report from the Planning Department I am not going to commit myself one way or the other.

There may be a new application.

3.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts
[Answered by Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance]

Question: How many responses have you received to your consultation on the draft budget?

Answer: Thank you Paul.

The consultation is still ongoing but I will submit on your behalf your £3.9m spending request because of your vote at extraordinary Council yesterday to that consultation.

Responses come in many forms. We have had a Let's Talk event with the voluntary sector in December. This involved 50 people who represent a large number of communities and groups. At this event we took people through our five key principles when setting the budget. I am pleased to say the group supported the principle.

A freelance copywriter, Shirley Wootton from Pinner said

“It was great to hear and share ideas with a cross section of the community. I found it informative and reassuring to know the Council seeks such feedback. I agree with the decisions made around the budget because it is vital to protect essential services.”

I am glad that people said they did want to protect services such as libraries and children’s centres. We have also had an Overview and Scrutiny meeting which I thought was really useful. I have had the great opportunity to speak twice on the Breakfast Show at Harrow Community Radio about the budget. Today we have had some public questions about a particular part of the budget. I have, and as have my colleagues, had a number of emails around areas of the budget. I have been knocking on doors in my Ward and across the borough and been talking to people about the budget, about the issues and what proposals are. I am sure by the time the Council Tax is set I will have spoken to hundreds of people.

As a direct consequence of the budget and the government settlement, we will be launching a campaign to get a fairer grant which we will use as part of the consultation document.

A number of proposals in the budget have had their own consultation including the Council Tax Support Scheme which has had 6,000 people involved.

We have an online form and to date 48 responses have been made, although I expect that number to rise. I look forward to reading the Conservative Group’s response to the consultation. As a responsible opposition I expect that will include a real alternative rather than the opportunistic rhetoric we heard at yesterday. I also note that at this Cabinet meeting we have had a petition of 1,800 people which we will submit to the budget consultation.

So the answer is 1,800, plus 48, plus 300, plus 6,000, plus however many people listen to Harrow Community Radio, plus all the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who were there, plus the 50 people who turned up at the Let’s Talk event.

Supplemental Question:

Thank you but by announcing in the middle of this consultation that you have decided to be one of the only Councils in London to increase Council Tax, do you not risk (a) invalidating the entire consultation because you are changing the basis on which it’s being done and (b) predetermining a decision that you are going to have to

make next month?

Supplemental Answer: No.

4.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: The draft budget suggests Community, Health and Wellbeing savings of over £1 million will be achieved in 2014-15. Could you provide a breakdown of what those savings are likely to be, given the size of the amount proposed?

Answer: I will try to help you Barry insofar as I can at this stage before the final budget.

I noticed that you in your question talk about the Community, Health and Wellbeing savings which actually includes more than my Portfolio. So I will cover ones that come under my Portfolio.

These savings are still being worked out in detail and will be presented as part of the February Cabinet/Council meetings. However, I can tell you some areas that are being finally decided which is to capitalise occupational therapy salaries, efficiencies and service reductions from the Supporting People grant and reviewing voluntary sector SLA spend and then also grants and efficiencies from improving joint working with the Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group.

Supplemental Question: We are worried in terms of public health transfer and we have asked this before. We are making sure that the needs assessment that we have got actually is going to be backed up by the money that is coming across from the transfer of public health because the PCT, up to 2010, had been slashing public health spend and yet there are public health needs. Now that is coming across with the responsibility, are we getting enough funding to cover that or is it going to be a cost shunt and, if so, how much now that we are getting closer to that point?.

Supplemental Answer: It is true that the PCT was not taking care of public health budgets as I would have liked pre 2010 and I have often said that.

However, with our joint working arrangement with Barnet that does help us at the upper end of the scale for staffing, as you will know and also the announcement last Friday on the final National Public Health grant which, we are not exactly sure to a pound what extra we are getting, but it is considerable. So we feel we will be able to cater for the Harrow side, cater for the whole of the list of public spend requirements that are statutory and that is the basis on which we are working.

5.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts
[Answered by Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance]

Question: Is it hoped that the new spending protocol will deliver savings by itself and, if so, from which departments are you most keen for it to achieve savings?

Answer: Thank you.

Yes, the new spending protocol will deliver savings. The reason we have a spending protocol is because of the huge and unnecessary cuts to local government inflicted on us by the coalition government. Making the savings has had an upfront cost and the protocol will help us fund that cost.

The spending protocol applies to the whole of the Council.

Supplemental Question: Notwithstanding the party political rhetoric which seems to be falling into problems as we found last night with Merton Council, a Labour controlled Council choosing to absorb the Council Tax Benefit Localisation whereas Harrow is passing it on.

I would just like to ask, with the budget being set and with all the draconian cuts that you keep telling us you are making, how then are you going to be taking even more cuts out of the system after the budget has been set, over and above what is being voted upon next month, because those extra savings are going to be being clawed down. We have heard in areas like Social Services you need extensive consultation with the public before you can make any major changes in funding.

So which ones are they? Which things in Public Realm

are you going to be cutting most next, not including the budget?

Supplemental Answer: Just to clarify, the spending protocol applies to this year. So it is not next year's budget. We are talking about the current in-year that the spending protocol applies to.

Cllr Macleod-Cullinane We were told in P&F in our briefing that it would be applying to 2013-14 financial year.

Cllr Shah: No decisions have been made about next year. The spending protocol that is in place is for this financial year only. I will look into the comments you have made and where you got that information from.

6.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services

Question: Could you confirm how many staff have paid £15 to use the Council phones and Internet for personal use, under the terms of the Council's Internet Policy?

Answer: 545 staff.

Supplemental Question I am amazed it is that much.

What actually are you taking for those staff who have not used it because I believe those are not the only 500 staff who are using the internet or phones for personal reasons. Do you not think that we should look at that policy again because if people are not following it, because it is significantly more than 500 staff employed by the Council, do you not risk the whole policy being discredited?

Supplemental Answer: We are reviewing a number of policies as you well know but I think we need to prioritise which ones we go through.

Employees who do not wish to pay the £15 can make volunteered payments, can choose to make payments through cash in the Cashiers' Office downstairs if they so wish but there is a point in the policy itself that if there is excessive use then it is part of the Conduct Procedure.

7.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: You said in November that the money raised by changes to Council Tax collection would be used 'to pay for social service provision across the borough'. Can you confirm that all funds raised through these changes will be directed towards social service provision, and how it will be divided up between the different departments which would likely qualify for it?

Answer: Thank you.

You have quoted me partially. Let me read you the full quote which I said in the press release sent out on 16 November 2012.

The quote is:

“More than £60m will be cut from Harrow Council’s budget as a result of government’s austerity programme. The additional money collected will be to ensure the Council continues to support Harrow’s most vulnerable residents. It will help close the gap left by government’s budgets and provide the much needed funds to pay for Social Service provision across the borough. In tough times it is right that those with the broadest shoulders pay the biggest burden and that is why it is right we no longer give people a subsidy paid by other tax payers to have a second home. By charging 150% Council Tax on long term empties it will encourage landlords to bring their properties back into use. Long term empty properties often bring with them crime, with boarded up windows, overgrown gardens. It is about time we acted to stop this.”

To answer your question, yes it will be. All £620,000 raised from technical changes in Council Tax, which was agreed at extraordinary Council yesterday, will be used to fund additional demographic pressures in both Children’s Services and Adult Services.

Supplemental Question: So that will be officially ring fenced to those two departments?

Supplemental Answer: Yes, in the draft budget and in the full budget that will go to Council and Cabinet next month you will see there is growth because demographic pressures totalling £4.2m and this £620,000 will be used to fund that.

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

8.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

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

Question: Your Portfolio Holder for Finance announced on Tuesday last week that Harrow's Council Tax would increase by 2%. The next day, you said at Overview and Scrutiny that the Council Tax increase is 'still draft', and 'not set in stone'. Can you confirm whether Council Tax is going up by 2% or not?

Written Response: The Administration's proposal for Council Tax includes a 2% increase in 2013-14.

This at this point just a proposal and still needs to be considered by Cabinet in February with the final decision being made by Council on 28 February. Until decided by Council the Council Tax is 'not set in stone'.

9.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Question: According to an answer at December's Cabinet meeting, there are approximately £600,000 of savings which have been delayed or not realised. Could you provide an update on these figures to date, and the expected full year effect figures?

Written Response: The figure included in the draft budget of £644k has not changed, although it should be noted that £417k of the savings were an estimate for new savings in 2013-14.

It should also be noted that £172k of the proposals are still being taken forward but are shown separately – these are the Performance, Research & Analysis Business Case and New Operating Model Strategic Commissioning £132k and Merger of Consultation Officer into Communications team £40k.

£75k of the £644k relates to the Shared Legal service saving where the total saving is now estimated at £225k

rather than £300k.

A significant element of the balance can no longer be saved as Directorates have now proposed savings within the areas that had been proposed for aggregation and reduction. Aggregation of services will still proceed, however they will not now produce significant additional savings but enable greater resilience in the reduced services.

10.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: Regarding the s.256 money that was provided by the Department of Health for social care with health benefits; could you confirm how much of this was spent on social care, and what quantifiable improvements and savings outcomes have resulted from this investment?

Written Response: As I am sure you are aware the Council signed a two year agreement with Harrow PCT in March 2011, in relation to funding of £2.6m in 2011/12 and £2.489m in 2012-13 to be passported to the Council.

In Harrow, as in much of the rest of country, it was agreed that these resources would be allocated to covering the existing and rising pressures in Adult Social Care including fully funding demographic growth to ensure the Council could continue to support the most vulnerable residents in Harrow and to protect them from further cuts as far as possible.

This demographic growth has meant that the Council have been able to support over an extra 100 people in the community therefore maintaining their independence and quality of life. Many of these have benefited from personal budgets therefore increasing their choice and control. This growth has also enabled protection of other services like reablement, which continues to deliver savings (£750k in the current financial year) and continues to have satisfaction levels above 90%.

11.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: When you are in discussion with your Labour colleagues at a London level, what's it like to be the only tax raiser?

Written Response: Every Council has different budgetary problems, pressures and levels of reserves. All Labour Leaders appreciate problems faced by each other.

I believe that "Tory tax con" would have put more local services at risk or meant even higher rises in future years, as the pressure-cooker scenario builds up.

In fact, the first thought which occurred to me was that our country, and Local Government in particular, will suffer due to the ideological cuts this government has forced on us.

With the British economy not recovering, the advice of IMF is to consider Plan B since Britain's AAA rating is seriously in doubt. However, this Tory-led government is too embarrassed to change course.

David Cameron calls Local Government the most efficient part of the Public Sector yet his Government has chosen this very sector for the most severe cuts.

This is "Tory Poll Tax", under the guise of Localism and Welfare Reforms.

With heavy heart and after careful consideration, our proposal to raise Council Tax by 47p per week, less than pint of milk, will mean that we can avoid closing local libraries and children's centres to protect the most vulnerable while investing in and maintaining key services for our residents.

RESOLVED ITEMS

568. Key Decision Schedule January - March 2013

Cabinet considered the Key Decision Schedule for January to March 2013 that included an item on 'HRA Budget 2013/14 and MTFS 2014/15 to 2016/17' for January, which had been deferred to February 2013 Cabinet meeting.

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

569. Education Strategy Consultative Forum

RESOLVED: That Councillor Zarina Khalid be appointed Chairman of the Education Strategy Consultative Forum.

570. Progress on Scrutiny Projects

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

571. Draft Climate Change Action Plan and Draft Delivering Warmer Homes (HECA)

Cabinet received comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 December 2012 on the draft Climate Change Action Plan and the draft Delivering Warmer Homes report' which were currently subject to public consultation.

RESOLVED: That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Reason for Decision: To receive comments as part of the consultation process.

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].

572. Response to Scrutiny Review of Housing Revenue Account Self Financing

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing responding to the comments and recommendations made by members of the Standing Scrutiny Review of the Budget in relation to the self-financing of the Housing Revenue Account.

The Leader of the Council invited the Chairman of the Review Group to address Cabinet.

The Chairman of the Review Group set out the background to the Review Group's report, which had resulted from the change in government policy on the Housing Revenue Account. The change had enabled local authorities to 'buy out' from the HRA, an option taken by the Council. In so doing, the Council had taken on a debt in the region of £88.5m to be paid over a period of 50 years, whilst other authorities, such as Wandsworth Council, which the Review Group had visited during the review, would be paying their debt over a shorter timescale of 13 years. Such a course of action would result in a less tax burden for its residents. The Review Group was therefore concerned about the approach taken by Harrow.

The Chairman of the Review Group also commended Wandsworth Council's Hidden Homes Strategy, which would result in finding pockets of space that could be converted to provide additional housing in the borough by leveraging. Harrow's Housing Action Plan, which made reference to the Hidden Homes Strategy had not been actioned and he considered this to be a missed opportunity for residents of Harrow. Additionally, Harrow's housing stock was small and any increase in Right to Buy would leave Harrow's residents in a vulnerable position. Moreover, opportunities for stock transfers needed to be examined by the Council.

The Review Group had also considered the scope of working with other authorities through a shared service approach. The Chairman of the Review Group added that, perhaps, Harrow's Housing Service ought to be shared with another borough in order to achieve economies of scale and improve the quality of life of residents. He added that the Council ought to encourage and advise residents on how they could purchase properties in order to meet its obligations as a borough of opportunity and aspiration.

Additionally, the income of the HRA and servicing of the debt would have implications for rents charged for social housing stock. The Review Group had noted that the quality and valuation of homes would be looked at and it had noted that plans were afoot to look at rent revaluation which would help service the debt. Consideration ought to be given to the implication of a revaluation, which would result in a higher ceiling on debt. With regard to this, the Council would benefit from joint working with other boroughs and leveraging of private finance would help improve the Council's housing stock.

The Council also needed to ensure that the coalition government's welfare reforms would not impact adversely on the vulnerable and marginalise members of the community. Particular reference was made to the Council's bailiff contract.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing thanked the Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group and its Members for conducting a positive review on how the HRA was managed, which would allow the Council to examine ways to bring about an increase in the supply of affordable housing and to include hidden homes as part of its overall plans.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Council would advise its tenants who wished to exercise a 'Right to Buy' their property and private landlords to lease their properties for the Council to manage. Moreover, officers were working with organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau to inform tenants of the risks associated with the government's welfare reforms. Additional information would be provided to tenants in March, particularly on what they needed to do to protect their homes. Additionally, a business plan on the Housing Changes Review would be submitted to Cabinet in April.

In response to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group drew attention to an external review that had been commissioned in relation to recommendation 1 of the Scrutiny Review Group's report. He enquired about the cost of the external review and stated that given the caliber of Harrow staff, it was unnecessary for the review to be

conducted externally. Moreover, the Hidden Homes Strategy had been discussed numerous times but the Council needed to be vigorous and innovative in implementing it. A fundamental concern of the Scrutiny Review Group was the risks associated with the debt which was to be paid over a period of 50 years was too long, including the 30-year business plan. The risks had not been made apparent in the reports considered. Changes in local and national governments during this period would also have wide ranging implications.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services spoke about the reports that had been submitted to the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum (TLRCF), which had been illuminating around the changes taking place on welfare reforms. His main concern was recommendation 6 of the Scrutiny Review Group and the impact of the coalition government's welfare reforms. It was unclear whether or not housing benefit payment would be centralised under the localism agenda, and direct payments could result in the recipient spending the money rather than paying the rent, thereby resulting in a risk to the Council's budget.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group agreed with the sentiments expressed by the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services and the impact this could have on the Council, as landlords. It would undermine the Council's income stream which in turn would undermine the Council's business case. The situation would be exacerbated by the Council's bailiff contract.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing informed Cabinet that 350 tenants were currently being monitored. Additionally, a number of issues would be discussed at the TLRCF on 31 January. The Portfolio Holder stated that a meeting with the Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group would be a useful starting point.

The Chairman of the Review Group and the Portfolio Holder for Housing thanked all those involved in the Scrutiny Review Group for their contributions.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To enable the response to the recommendations to be formalised.

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].

573. Transformation of Day Services in Harrow

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing introduced the report, which set out a vision for the Transformation of Day Services in

Harrow and approval to consult on the proposals. The review concentrated on all services used by the borough, including seven Day Centres provided by the Council.

The Portfolio Holder added that the consultation would commence in February and last until May with the outcome being reported to Cabinet in July 2013 for decision. The consultation period would provide ample opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved in the process. She highlighted why changes were needed, as follows: the high number of personalised budgets in Harrow; demographic changes; the need to ensure that services provided were sustainable for the future, including how communities could help the vulnerable; to allow social workers to carry outcomes forward in a positive and complimentary way.

The Portfolio Holder commended the report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) consultation to include steps to rationalise internal Day Services provision in line with spare capacity identified and in order to deliver the MTFs target of £600k in a year be approved;
- (2) through consultation be developed with relevant stakeholders, including service users, carers, staff and Unions, including a long-term vision for a transformed model for day opportunities for people with learning disabilities, physical disability and sensory impairment and older people in Harrow;
- (3) alternative models for day opportunities be considered and a range of options that increase opportunities for social inclusion, maximise choice and control, improve health and well-being, increase employability and deliver efficiencies be developed;
- (4) the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder(s), be authorised to:
 - design and implement the consultation plan for service users, carers and families, staff, Unions and other key stakeholders;
 - prepare a final report with the results of the consultation and detailed recommendations for consideration by Cabinet in July 2013.

Reason for Decision: Involvement of key stakeholders was a central aspect of this review which aimed to ensure that services were strategically aligned and financially affordable for the future.

To further develop the way that Day Services work in the borough. To establish a service model that supports the government's ambition to offer personal budgets to at least 70% of service users with a strong focus on Direct Payments by 2013; deliver £600k revenue savings over 2013/14 and 2014/15; support greater integration of health and social care services in

order to develop improved, seamless, preventative services; develop a continuum of services that service users would want to buy, which responds to the prevention agenda and support independence and inclusion; enable people to purchase these through the Council's on-line social care portal; promote diversity and quality in the provision of services including increasing culturally specific services, in line with the Care and Support Bill; respond to the changing demographic profile of people who use Day Services; encourage communities to take an increasingly prominent role in supporting vulnerable groups through the development of community capacity and social capital – breaking down barriers and moving towards greater social inclusion; ensure that the Council uses the buildings available in the most effective and efficient ways; support staff delivering services and offer greater job satisfaction and job security.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: To do nothing by continuing to provide and commission services as done currently.

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

574. Key Decision - Calculation of Business Rates Income for 2013/14

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which set out the changes to the way non domestic rates (NDR) were distributed from 1 April 2013 as a result of the Local Government Finance Act 2012. The draft regulations required billing authorities to formally calculate the estimated level of NDR it anticipated collecting for 2013/14 and pass this information to the Secretary of State and precepting authorities by 31 January 2013.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reported that an element of the Act was a Business Rate Retention (BRR) scheme which was aimed at giving Councils autonomy and a greater stake in the economic future of their local area. The Portfolio Holder explained that the Council would only be able to keep 30% of the business rates collected and the government's intention was to incentivise local government to promote and facilitate business growth in their areas. He added that the BRR scheme was complex.

RESOLVED: That, having considered the information given in the report, the following be agreed:

- (1) the Non Domestic Rates (NDR) estimates and calculations be calculated in accordance with the draft regulations, as follows:

		£m
	Projected NDR Income 2013/14	49.083
Less	Payable to DCLG (50% Central Share)	(24.541)
Less	Payable to the Greater London Authority (20%)	(9.817)
Equals	Amount to be retained by Harrow (30%)	14.725

- (2) the above information be provided to the Secretary of State and Greater London Authority (GLA) by 31 January 2013.

Reason for Decision: To fulfill the Council's anticipated statutory obligation to provide estimates and calculations in relation to NDR for 2013/14.

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].

575. Key Decision - Calculation of Council Tax Base for 2013/14

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report, which required the Council to formally calculate the Council Tax Base for 2013/14 with a view to passing the information to precepting authorities by 31 January 2013. The tax base had to be set between 1 December 2012 and 31 January 2013.

The Portfolio Holder added that due to the number of discounts and the local Council Tax support scheme, the Council Tax base was lower and would have a consequential effect on the Council.

RESOLVED: That, having considered the information given in the report, the following be agreed:

- (a) band D equivalent number of taxable properties be calculated as shown in the report, in accordance with the government regulations;
- (b) provision for uncollectable amounts of Council Tax for 2013/14 be agreed at 2.50%, producing an expected collection rate of 97.50%;
- (c) subject to resolutions (1) and (2) above, a Council Tax Base for 2013/14 of 76,874 Band D equivalent properties (being 78,845 x 97.50%) be approved, allowing for payment in lieu of Ministry of Defence properties.

Reason for Decision: To fulfill Council's statutory obligation to set the Council Tax Base for 2013/14.

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].

576. Key Decision - Draft Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2016/17

Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which set out the proposed Capital Programme for 2013/14 and the indicative resources

levels for 2014/15 to 2016/17 that formed part of the annual budget review process.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to the uncertainties in the level of future capital resources, as a result of which the programme had been detailed for the first year only with indicative funding levels thereafter. He outlined some of the flagships of the programme, as follows:

- disabled facilities grant, which the administration was proud of as it allowed the Council to help the needy;
- empty properties and private sector initiatives grant, which complimented the scrutiny review;
- investment in schools, resulting in the school expansions programme;
- investment in highways to help address a backlog and ensure safety;
- investment in street lighting, as a result of which the lighting in parts of the borough had been markedly improved;
- £460k investment towards the Harrow Card.

The Portfolio Holder added that further reports would be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2013, at which time he would address the relevant meetings.

RESOLVED: That the draft Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved for consultation, with the final version being presented to the February 2013 meeting of Cabinet.

Reason for Decision: To enable the Council to have an approved Capital Programme for 2013-14.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None.

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

577. West London Alliance Accord

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services introduced the report, which sought authority to adopt the WLA Accord as the basis of the continued development of collaborative approaches by the West London boroughs. The report set out Harrow Council's participation in and contribution to the West London Alliance (WLA) Programme of collaborative working.

The Portfolio Holder commended the relationship established amongst the boroughs and the opportunities available to develop this further. The governance arrangements in place would allow for regular progress reports to

be presented to participating Councils. The cross-borough working provided a good basis upon which shared services could be developed further.

The Chief Executive was proud to report that engagement in the West London Alliance had far exceeded the Council's investment. He added that the Accord provided a good basis upon which accountability and transparency of the West London Alliance would be realised, and commended the report to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the new West London Alliance (WLA) Accord be adopted, as the basis of ongoing collaborative working amongst the boroughs of Hounslow, Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon, with authority being given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services, to agree any appropriate minor alterations to the Accord;
- (2) the Chief Executive be authorised to agree Harrow's annual financial contributions to the WLA to be met from existing budget provision.

Reason for Decision: To underpin Harrow's participation in the collaborative working to achieve service improvement and efficiencies amongst participating Councils and ensure Harrow is a part of the growing programme of collaboration, as described in the WLA's first Annual Report.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: To do nothing, which was not considered to be a viable option.

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

578. Calendar of Meetings 2013/14

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance Services, which set out the Council's Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Customer Services and Corporate Services stated that this was a draft timetable and that some meetings might be removed as a result of an ongoing review, including the savings earmarked in the draft budget. He cited an example of how this might be achieved, such as a report to the next meeting of the Employees' Consultative Forum which would consider a review of the way in which the body would work in the future.

The Portfolio Holder also sought Cabinet's approval to the start time of meetings of Annual Council, a ceremonial event where guests were invited. He advised that Annual Council should commence earlier to allow for full participation and enjoyment of the ceremonial Mayor Making event.

RESOLVED: That, subject to minor amendments and Annual Council commencing at 6.30 pm, the Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2013/14 be approved.

Reason for Decision: To facilitate the planning and forward commitments of both Members and officers. To allow the room booking arrangements to be put in place at the earliest opportunity.

Alternative Options considered and rejected: None other than it was considered prudent to have a programme in place.

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

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.40 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR THAYA IDAIKKADAR
Chairman