

**LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW**

**COUNCIL**

**14 NOVEMBER 2013**

**QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE (ITEM 15)**

Fifteen minutes will be allowed for Members of the Council to ask a Portfolio Holder a question on any matter in relation to which the Executive has powers or duties.

1.

**Questioner:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

**Asked of:** Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)

**Question:** “Without going into any personal or confidential details could you provide breakdown of what was the BAME staff profile at the level of Head of Service, Divisional Director and Service Managers levels of the previous structure at Environmental Services? And what is the new profile of the BAME staff at the same level now at Divisional Director and ESM level.”

**Answer:** The original pre-towards excellence structure had two members of BAME staff at Service Manager, Divisional Director and Head of Service Level. The new structure has appointed three BAME members of staff at Divisional Director and ESM levels.

As is the case in many organisations, BAME employees are less well represented in management roles across the Council. The additional member in the new structure is therefore a positive step in our progress to re-dress this imbalance in our workforce.

**Supplemental Question:** Susan, this does not reflect the whole society in Harrow. Why do you think it is?

**Supplemental Answer:** I do not know. It is something that clearly you could have sorted out when you were in control and to be very fair, we did not sort out when we were in control before that. It is an ongoing issue for all of us. We do not reflect the society within which we work and it is obviously worth looking into.

On 25<sup>th</sup> of this month, I believe Thaya, you, I and Alex Dewsnap have got a meeting to see how we can take forward issues to

see how we treat BAME staff etc in the Council. We all take this issue seriously and if anybody can come up with very good ideas as to what we can do to make it better then please do let us know because it is an important issue.

2.

**Questioner:** Councillor William Stoodley

**Asked of:** Councillor Paul Osborn (Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources)  
*Answer provided by Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)*

**Question:** "I note that the scrap metal licence decision was taken as an urgent decision. Can you tell me why this was not referred to Cabinet?"

**Answer:** Yes I can and I am quite thrilled to tell you this one.

Whilst the Scrap Dealers Act 2013 received Royal Assent on 28 February 2013, the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 (Commencement and Transitional Provisions) Order 2013 was not made until 6 August 2013. This Order laid down the timescales in respect of the introduction of the main provisions of the Act and the transitional period in respect of the receipt by local authorities of applications from persons who are currently registered as a scrap metal dealer or motor salvage operator.

The Council had between 1 September and 1 October to set its fees and it was best felt to do this at the beginning of this timeframe. Therefore, permission to sign off was obtained by an Urgent Non-Executive Action, signed by all three group leaders and explained to all three leaders, between 28 and 30 August. Therefore, it was done with complete co-operation of all parties.

**Supplemental Question:** Could the Leader explain why she felt it was satisfactory to nod something through with the signature of all three leaders of the main major parties with respect to scrap metal but not with respect to the Community Infrastructure Levy?

**Supplemental Answer:** You cannot compare apples and pears.

3.

**Questioner:** Councillor Krishna James

**Asked of:** Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane (Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing)

**Question:** “Could you provide the ethnic breakdown of mental health service users especially numbers of Afghan, African Caribbean, Gujarati, Somali and Tamil origin; and what specific provisions do we have to meet their needs in Harrow?”

**Answer:** Thank you very much Councillor James for your question.

This is a very broad question and to answer it from a social care perspective is quite important. We are entirely compliant with the law but the distinction that you are drawing between the various groupings are not recognised by the law that we have to comply with and which we do comply with. I would like to give you a broad sense using the Referrals, Assessments and Packages (RAP) of care data from 2012/13 which is following the Department of Health classifications under the Equality Act 2010 and in terms of the Mental Health clients who presented and were offered a secondary social care service the breakdown of their identified ethnicity were as follows:

37% were White British;  
10% Other White background;  
14% Indian;  
12% Other Asian background;  
13% Any other ethnic group  
5% Black Caribbean;  
5% Black African.  
2% Any other Black  
2% Not obtained or Refused

It is important to understand what we do to support the various groups. As you can see, the actual presentation fits very closely what we know is the general demographic make up of Harrow from the latest census data and it is important to understand how services that we are providing to the various groups are so followed.

In terms of service provision within Harrow, there are a range of mental health services which target people from particular ethnic faith or heritage backgrounds, in the voluntary and community service sector, including Sneh Care, Ekta, Hayaan and DAWN.

The Bridge is also developing as a flexible community resource for people living with mental illness and a growing range of diverse groups are starting, including an Asian Women’s Group (led by DAWN), a BME advice service (led by Rethink), a Tamil group (led by an existing Tamil support network from out of the borough who have been invited to Harrow by the Vice Chair of the Harrow User Group). Ekta does not require access to The Bridge as it is operating happily elsewhere but discussions are ongoing about opportunities for other groups to come into The Bridge. All of the services can be found on the Mind website

and I recommend that you read that and if there are any gaps we will be more than happy to look at that to make sure that groups are being covered and we are not missing any of our wonderful residents out because it is fair to make sure, and I would urge everyone to be alert to how Mental Health can be overlooked, unlike physical disabilities, it is something which people just do not see and we need to make sure that we stand there and support people who do need our assistance.

Harrow has developed a huge range of multiple services through its personalisation agenda and that I think it is a really encouraging development because it is meaning that we are making sure service care is tailored to the individual care needs of the user far more so than in the past, which ultimately lead to better outcomes in the modern service.

**Supplemental Question:** Thank you very much for a very comprehensive answer and I am aware of some of the stats and I will be looking further into them.

What I do want to ask supplementary is that have you actually made it your business to look at some of the specific BME provisions yourself or do you know of anything recently that is being checked out, because the reports I get are slightly different? It appears very good comprehensively but I would like him, if I could mention, because I am concerned about Ekta you mention and also Sneh Care. What actually goes on there? I would like us to follow it through.

**Supplemental Answer:** I would be more than happy to sit down and go through any concerns you might have and indeed for any other Member in this Chamber and any members of the public here. This is an important issue to get right. It is an important issue that we need to get right and provide support to make sure that we have the services in place.

We have got a range of new groups and organisations coming in, but we need to make sure that those services are done correctly. We have got a peer review on Adult Safeguarding coming in next week and it is part of that review. Are we doing the right things? Are we making sure our governance around the people who are most at risk are being followed through? I would urge everyone who has not been trained to do so on Safeguarding. It is absolutely vital and Mental Health is an important part of that.

Thank you.

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

4.

**Questioner:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

**Asked of:** Councillor Stephen Wright (Property and Major Contracts)

**Question:** "Is the Portfolio Holder aware there is a contract called BARTEC and what it actually delivers?"

**Written Answer:** The council does not have a contract with Bartec. Capita who are contracted with the council as part of the business transformation programme have subcontracted Bartec to implement a common IT system for all of environmental front line services and operational staff. This contract will provide a flexible solution enabling reporting on a wide range of services, better and timely communication with customers across all channels, schedule pre-planned and assign reactive work, provide performance management to ensure work is being completed to time, quality and standard and replace paper with a range of mobile devices.

5.

**Questioner:** Councillor William Stoodley

**Asked of:** Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)

**Question:** "How do you rate Harrow Council's relationship with the local police?"

**Answer:** Harrow Council continues to enjoy an extremely positive relationship with the Police, working under the Partnership banner of Safer Harrow. The relationship is rated highly by both sides.

Our joint work with the Police is, I believe, second to none and sees us working together on many projects. The Police are key partners in crime reduction, obviously, and participate in monthly joint intelligence and tasking meetings. The Police also contribute positively to the reduction of anti-social behaviour with two officers embedded in the Council's ASB service at the depot.

The Police also make key contributions to both children's and adult safeguarding work through work on the MASH and MARAC initiatives. Council officers routinely have close contact with Police colleagues and this has led to very positive working relationships which have benefited both the Police and the Council.

6.

**Questioner:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

**Asked of:** Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)

**Question:** "How much the PRISM has cost the Council?"

**Written Answer:** Actual expenditure to date for the PRISM project is £1,449K.

7.

**Questioner:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

**Asked of:** Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)

**Question:** "Cllr Hall has publicly blamed CAPITA for a number of things. How does this publicly posturing affect Council's procurement policy?"

**Written Answer:** Whilst Capita has done a good job running the day to day IT service there have been significant delays in their delivery of the transformation programme for IT. These delays have caused problems for the Council and impacted the ability of our staff to carry out their jobs whilst using outdated equipment and systems. We have been very concerned about these delays, the impact they have had on our ability to run our services and on our reputation. The situation has not been acceptable and concerns have been discussed at the highest level of both organisations.

The Council however manages the contract very tightly and uses the contractual levers to bring about improvements. The costs of the programme over running have been borne by Capita.

This type of discussion between customer and supplier is not unusual and it is essential that we are very clear with our suppliers when they fall short of the expected performance levels.

Looking forward, we will be starting the process next year to re-procure our IT service. Officers have been working hard to prepare for this process. Our procurement strategy will be to appoint the best and most cost effective supplier to deliver the Council's needs.

8.

**Questioner:** Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

**Asked of:** Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)

**Question:** "Why has Flash Musicals been treated differently to any other lease operated and managed by the Council?"

**Written Answer:** As you know no final decision has been made, regarding Flash Musicals.

At this stage I don't think it is possible to say if Flash Musicals has been treated differently or not.

As you know, at the Call-in Committee, it was suggested that by taking the decision you took you had acted unfairly in relation to the Voluntary Sector.

I will be meeting with the Voluntary Sector soon to clarify if they have any concerns and I will be addressing other recommendations made by the Call-in Committee. You and I are both agreed that this long running saga must be brought to and end as soon as possible in a fair as way as possible.

9.

**Questioner:** Councillor William Stoodley

**Asked of:** Councillor Janet Mote (Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools)

**Question:** "How many children in our Borough left education in the last three years at the age of 16, and how many of them are now in full employment?"

**Written Answer:** The question asks about full-time employment. Most school leavers are in some form of education from 16-19 or in some form of part-time employment with an educational element attached to it. Those who were in employment, full time or otherwise, without any known educational input was as follows:

2010-11: 17

2011-12: 49

2012-13: 22

Total: 88

The percentage of Harrow's young people aged 16-18 years old who were not in Education/Employment/Training or whose

current activity is not known has dropped over the last few years.

As at 2012, 3.6% were either not in Education / Employment / Training (NEET) or whose current activity is not known, compared to 4.6% in 2011 and 5.1% in 2010. Latest figures (October 2013) show that just 1.9% are NEET. 77 young people are known to be NEET (Year 12-14), the lowest in north-west London. Figures to 2012-13 are not yet confirmed as, at this time of year, many young people are changing their options.

From June 2013 there is a duty on all young people to continue in education or training until their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and, from June 2015 to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Employers who employ young people without any recognised training or educational provision offer who left school this year would be in breach of this duty too.

10.

**Questioner:** Councillor Krishna James

**Asked of:** Councillor Susan Hall (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment)

**Question:** "In relation to rubbish outside Glebe School and kids delegation and presentation before the Council, what is the portfolio holder doing to address this problem?"

**Written Answer:** The current administration has increased the cleansing of residential areas across the Borough from a six week to four week cycle when a hand sweep of all pavements and a mechanical sweep of all carriageways take place. The cleanliness of the borough is one of the stated proprieties of this administration and new resources have being applied to this issue. The area adjacent to Glebe school is blighted by fly tipping. The Council's Blitz Team have cleared rubbish from the vicinity and our scheduled cleansing has been increased around the school. In between these scheduled cleans we would also remove any reported fly tips with in 24hrs (1 working day).

With regard to residents and shops using the litter bins, when street cleaning staff identifies evidence that links fly tipped waste to a person or premises they inform officers in the Enviro-crime team for the circumstances to be further investigated. Enviro-crime officers look at the evidence and where this is sufficient take further enforcement action. This action might range from a formal warning, through to an appearance in the Magistrates or Crown Court to answer charges.