

CABINET MINUTES

15 JANUARY 2014

Chairman: * Councillor Susan Hall

Councillors:

* Kam Chana	* Janet Mote
* Tony Ferrari	* Paul Osborn
* Stephen Greek	* Simon Williams
† Manji Kara	* Stephen Wright
* Barry Macleod-Cullinane	

**Non Executive
Non Voting
Councillors:**

* Graham Henson	* David Perry
* Thaya Idaikkadar	

In attendance: (Councillors)	Krishna James	Minute 757
	Asad Omar	Minute 757
	Bill Phillips	Minute 770

- * Denotes Member present
- † Denotes apologies received

[Note 1: The items were taken in the order set out on the agenda, except that item 11 'Safeguarding Adults Peer Review' was considered after item 5 'Public Questions' to allow visitors presenting the report at item 11 to leave the meeting earlier. However, as was customary, the minutes are set out in the following order: Formal Business; Recommendations, if any, to Council on substantive items; Discussions and decisions on the remaining substantive items set out on the agenda.]

[Note 2: The Leader of the Council announced that:

- 15 minutes would be allowed for the asking and answering of public and Councillor questions;

- the audio recording of the public and Councillor questions and answers would be placed on the website;
- individual requests for transcripts would be considered on a case by case basis;
- answers to questions not reached at meetings would be posted alongside the audio recording. Democratic Services would aim to place the audio recording on the website within 5 clear working days of the meeting.]

752. Apologies for Absence

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Kam Chana and a belated apology for absence was received from Councillor Manji Kara.

753. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that during consideration of item 18 'Senior Management Structure', Councillor Greek declared a non-pecuniary interest when referring to the deletion of the post of the Chief Executive at the Greater London Authority (GLA), in that he was employed by the GLA. He remained in the room whilst the matter was considered and voted upon.

754. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2013, be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to an amendment to reflect Councillor Stoodley having been present at the meeting in place of Councillor Idiakkadar for the entire meeting.

755. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

756. Public Questions

To note that 1 public question had been received and responded to, and in line with the statement made by the Leader of the Council (see Note 2 above) the recording has been placed on the website.

757. Councillor Questions

To note that 6 Councillor questions had been received and responded to, and in line with the statement made by the Leader of the Council (see Note 2 above) the recording has been placed on the website.

758. Key Decision Schedule January 2014 - March 2014

RESOLVED: To note the contents of the Key Decision Schedule for January 2014.

759. Progress on Scrutiny Projects

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

RESOLVED ITEMS

760. Customer Care Scrutiny Review

Cabinet received the findings of the Customer Care Scrutiny Review Group, which acknowledged the significant improvements made to customer care and recognised that there were areas which needed improvement. It was noted that a response report to the next Cabinet meeting would address the conclusions and recommendations made by the Review Group.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Scrutiny Review Group 'Putting the Customer First Customer Care at Harrow Council' be welcomed and the Corporate Director of Resources be requested to submit a report to the February 2014 Cabinet meeting responding to the recommendations of the Review Group.

Reason for Decision: To allow Cabinet to consider and respond to the Review Group's recommendations.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

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

761. School Expansion Programme

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools introduced the report, which provided a quarterly update to Cabinet on the implementation of the School Expansion Programme. The Portfolio Holder added that the purpose of the report was to ensure good governance and explained that a series of reports would be submitted to Cabinet with a view to keeping Members informed of the progress made.

Cabinet noted that the School Expansion Programme would help ensure that sufficient school places were available for Harrow's children, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). However, the expansion at St Anselm's Catholic Primary School would not now go ahead due to insurmountable challenges.

The Portfolio Holder explained that measures had also been put in place to address the traffic and congestion issues that would arise from the creation of additional school places. Moreover, appropriate engagement with all stakeholders had been put in train.

In response to questions from the Non-Voting Non-Executive Cabinet Members, the Portfolio Holder stated that:

- pre-planning engagement was underway on projects that would require planning consent for the build programme and to allow input from the stakeholders prior to proceeding to the statutory stage;
- only one school from the Programme that had been identified at risk of not expanding was St Anselm's Catholic Primary School due to its location and associated costs of expansion, which had made it unaffordable within the School Expansion Programme.

In summing up, the Portfolio Holder was pleased to announce that a cross-party Stakeholder Reference Group had been set up which also cut across Directorates with a view to ensuring the wellbeing of the education of children studying in Harrow.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the coalition government's funding as part of the Priority School Building and the Targeted Basic Needs Programmes to fund and deliver the School Expansion Programme.

RESOLVED: That the update on the implementation of the School Expansion Programme be noted.

Reason for Decision: To note the progress made and to enable the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory duties to provide sufficient school places in its area.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

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

[Call-in does not apply to decisions that have been noted.]

762. Harrow's Local Account 2012-13

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing introduced the report, which set out the main elements of the Harrow Local Account Report 2012-13. Local Accounts were used by Councils to assess how well adult social care services were performing and recent trend was to report these directly to local residents instead of the government, thereby increasing local accountability.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report on the strides that the Council had made in adult social care, with initiatives such as reablement and personalisation which had been commended by the government. Moreover, the improvements and innovations in adult social care had led to better outcomes for users whilst achieving savings for the Council and its partners. He thanked his predecessors for the work they had undertaken in this regard.

Members were informed that the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board was another area where work to help the vulnerable was being carried out and that the Board was working on a strategy for people with autism.

A non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member thanked the Portfolio Holder for recognising the work done in the adult social care area by his predecessor. Given the Council's financial situation, he asked what long term measures were being put in place by the administration to ensure that service levels were maintained and enhanced. In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that, with the help of the MyCommunity ePurse market place, the Directorate was driving down costs whilst increasing the quality of service provided. He recognised that an ageing population would create new challenges and finding new solutions would not be simple.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To have an overview of Harrow Adult Social Care performance during 2012-13.

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 to decisions that have been noted.]

763. Safeguarding Adults Peer Review

Cabinet received a report, which set out some background information about Peer Reviews and why Harrow Adult Services had decided to commission one. It provided details about the process of the Review, the findings of the Review Team and the next steps.

The Leader of the Council welcomed Cathy Kerr, Director of Adult and Community Services, London Borough of Richmond and Lead Peer Review Officer, and Cathie Williams, London Councils and Lead for Safeguarding in the Greater London Authority, and invited them to address Cabinet and report on their findings.

In her introductory remarks, Cathy Kerr said that brief headlines would be provided to Cabinet by her Peer Review colleague, Cathie Williams, following which questions would be taken from Members.

Cathie Williams referred to the report and highlighted six key points. She reported that safeguarding adults was a high risk area for all organisations and that, in Harrow, the Peer Review Team had witnessed cross-party commitment and strong leadership. There were many areas of excellence and a strong desire to tackle challenges. The staff were committed, specialists were knowledgeable, there had been an investment in social workers and the legal advice provided was excellent. There was scope for the Council to capture data which would provide information on the difference that the service was making, and to work collectively with its partners. The data and the intelligence gathered would help the providers to work proactively and provide preventative measures in this high risk area. In

summary, the Council was in position to tackle future challenges and the learning process during the Peer Review had been a reciprocal experience.

The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing recognised the value and benefits of a Peer Review and added that, whilst the review report was positive, there was no room for complacency in this challenging service area. He thanked a former Portfolio Holder for her work in this area.

In response to various questions from Members, Cathy Kerr and Cathie Williams replied that, in relation to the frontline partnership working, all systems needed to be confident and all partners, including staff, needed to be fully aware of their duties. The Peer Review Group had found that the specialists were very knowledgeable. It was important that contingencies to reach out to the harder to reach groups were in place, such as those for adults with mental health problems. The Peer Review Team had observed the work carried out in this area and had been impressed with the support given to individuals by the frontline practitioners working in Mental Health Trusts. In relation to those suffering from dementia, it had been recognised that a letter was not always a good way of communicating and that some encouraging feedback had been received about the advocacy services.

The Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing thanked Cathy Kerr and Cathie Williams for their presentations. They thanked the Director of Adult Social Services and the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing for their continued excellent work in the safeguarding of adults. The issue of partnership working and related challenges would be addressed through the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board which was chaired by the Leader. Additionally, the Council had set up an informal body to address 'families in trouble', such as those that did not fit into the government funding process.

In summary, the Acting Head of Paid Service, in his capacity as the Corporate Director of Community, Health and Wellbeing, recognised that this service area had risen to the challenges posed and had stretched itself to deliver a good service. He thanked Members for their strong political support to ensure good delivery.

RESOLVED: That the findings of the Peer Review and the next steps that the Local Safeguarding Adults Board would be considering taking forward in the next year be noted.

Reason for Decision: The safeguarding of vulnerable adults at risk of significant harm was a key duty for the Council and it was important for the Cabinet to be reassured that local arrangements were fit for purpose.

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 to decisions that have been noted.]

764. Key Decision - Brent and Harrow - Joint Trading Standards Service

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment introduced the report, which sought approval to the continuation of the joint arrangements of the Trading Standards Service between Brent and Harrow Councils and the continuation of benefits arising from the economies of scale by working jointly. She referred to a revised recommendation 2, details of which are set out in resolution 2 below.

The Portfolio Holder noted a concern about driving illegal money lending activities underground but explained that the Council had a public duty to address the issue and bring to justice those carrying on with this activity.

The Deputy Leader of the Council was keen that the Council should promote Credit Unions, like M for Money, as an option for those needing credit at a low interest rate but who had difficulty borrowing from banks.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the continued joint arrangements for the Trading Standards Service with Brent Council be noted and agreed, including delegations for additional aspects of the service, namely the illegal Money Lending Project and the charging for the Primary Authority Partnership;
- (2) the Leader of the Council be authorised to agree delegations in relation to Trading Standard Functions to officers of Brent Council, as appropriate.

Reason for Decision: To ensure delegation of an Executive function.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

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

The purpose of this report is to request that members consider its contents and note the continuation of the current partnership arrangement between the London Boroughs of Brent and Harrow and agree delegations to enable the finalisation of the Service Level Agreement.

765. Key Decision - Harrow Help Scheme Review

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report, which set out the outcome of the review of the pilot Harrow Help Scheme, providing Cabinet with the proposed policy changes for the financial year 2014/15. He added that some minor improvements had been made to a previous administration's Scheme.

A non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member enquired about the administration's position in regard to the recent funding announcement by the government of £489k, which he considered to be an unfair cut on the most vulnerable. He stated that his next administration would ensure that any

underspend in this Scheme would be carried forward to the following year and invited the administration's support in this regard.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that all the money that was available would be spent on the services for the people of Harrow. The Scheme was underfunded and the underfunding together with the previous administration's budget was made 'fit for purpose' by adding £600k for the provision of services to the elderly, £300k for special needs transport and £500k for additional social workers to support children in need. The Leader of the Council re-emphasised that the money was being used to improve the welfare of Harrow residents.

The same non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member claimed that, at both the national and local levels, the most vulnerable were being adversely affected. He was of the view that by providing extra money now, claiming it was electioneering, the administration was 'raiding' money which rate payers would have to pay for in later years.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Leader of the Council stated that it would be for the residents of Harrow to decide. The administration's budget provided for a cleaner, safer and fairer agenda instead of leaving money sitting in a Transformation fund which had not benefited Harrow's residents.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 'Local Welfare Provision' funding be utilised by operating the Emergency Relief Scheme for a second year 2014/15;
- (2) the changes to the Help Scheme Policy be agreed and adopted.

Reason for Decision: The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) allocated funding to all Local Authorities to provide a 'Local Welfare Provision' as a result of the changes to the Social Fund included within the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Further to close partnership working with a multi-agency group and public consultation, Harrow Council developed the Emergency Relief Scheme which was piloted for the first year of operation to give the Council the opportunity to understand need within the borough.

The pilot Emergency Relief Scheme had now been reviewed through consultation with Emergency Relief Scheme staff, referral partners and a sample of users of the Scheme. The feedback received throughout this process had helped to shape the changes to the proposed Scheme for the second year of operation - 2014/15.

The DWP had not confirmed the funding allocation post for 2014/15 and therefore the Emergency Relief Scheme had been redesigned to continue for one year in its current form and to be sufficiently flexible to cope with changes in programme funding in future years.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

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

766. Key Decision - Review of the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report, which set out the proposed changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy that had been shaped through partnership working with a multi-agency Debt Recovery Sub-Group, including feedback received from public consultation.

The Portfolio Holder outlined the origins of the report to when he had served on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the need to address the needs of the vulnerable members of the society. He added that the proposals met the administration's priorities and commended the report to Cabinet.

An officer provided clarification in relation to the calculation of the 'Benefits Overpayments' figure position. He reported that the figure represented the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments at any one time. These occurred because claimants informed the Council of their change in circumstances after a period of time, such as a pay rise, thereby resulting in an overpayment in benefits. The overpayment should not be seen as reckless administration and Members should note that the overpayment was legally recoverable by the Council.

A non-voting non-Executive Member asked how the report fitted in with the Council's Corporate Priorities agreed by full Council. He questioned how a decision could be made if the report did not accord with these priorities.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that notwithstanding the Corporate Priorities, the administration could make a decision based on its own priorities.

The same non-voting non-Executive Member was of the view that the Council's role was being undermined, as set out in the Budget and Policy Framework rules.

The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources challenged the non-voting non-Executive Member to exercise the Call-in process, which was the relevant body for such process. However, he would be surprised if such a step were taken as the proposals would ease the burden of corporate debt on the most vulnerable. The non-voting non-Executive Member stated that he was not talking about Calling-in the decision but wanted to understand how the proposals fitted in with the Corporate Priorities.

The Leader of the Council considered the proposals to be fair for the people of Harrow and therefore fitted into the administration's priorities.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy be agreed and adopted;

- (2) Council Debt Recovery Services update their individual debt policies to reflect the principles of the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy by 1 April 2014.

Reason for Decision: The Corporate Debt Policy was implemented in 2009. Issues were raised by Councillors at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the need for debt recovery services to recognise vulnerability within the collection processes. These concerns prompted an extensive review of the Corporate Debt Policy.

The review was carried out by working with both an internal officer group representing all Council Services and an external multi-agency sub group that included representation from the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD), Age UK Harrow, Harrow Mencap and Newlyns and Chandlers Bailiffs and Council Debt Recovery Services.

The policy had also been shaped through feedback from a public consultation carried out from 30 September 2013 to 24 November 2013. To allow all Council Debt Recovery Services to update their policies to reflect the principles of the Corporate policy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

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

767. Key decision - Calculation of Business Rates Tax Base for 2014-2015

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which calculated the estimated level of non-domestic rates (NDR) the Council expected to collect for 2014-15 with a view to informing the Secretary of State and precepting authorities in the preceding year.

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

- (1) the non domestic rates estimates (NDR) and calculations be calculated in accordance with the regulations as follows:

		£m
	Projected NDR Income 2014/15	48.364
Less	Payable to DCLG (50% Central Share)	(24.182)
Less	Payable to the Greater London Authority (20%)	<u>(9.673)</u>
Equals	Amount to be retained by Harrow (30%)	14.509

- (2) the above information be provided to the Secretary of State and the Greater London Authority (GLA) by 31 January 2014;
- (3) the Council's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), be authorised, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance,

to submit revised figures, from those above, to the Secretary of State and GLA by 31 January 2014, if further clarification was received from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the financial impact of the proposed changes to the authority and how this was to be calculated.

Reason for Decision: To fulfil the Council's statutory obligation to provide estimates and calculations in relation to NDR for 2014-15. To note that if the DCLG proposals, as noted in the report, were not implemented by the government, the Council's estimated NDR income figures would need revising so that they could be submitted by the 31 January 2014 deadline.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

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

768. Key Decision - Project Minerva

The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources introduced the report, which set out options for achieving cost reductions within the Resources Directorate for 2015/16 and beyond, including the rationale for proposing a re-tender of the IT Service.

The Portfolio Holder stated that two events had coincided and that these had been the key drivers to the proposals set out in the report: a breakpoint in the existing Capita Contract and the need to deliver savings in the region of 20% over the next few years. He explained that the stance taken from the outset was that were the Council to outsource back office services, it would be sensible to align its timing with any IT procurement. Additionally, when the Council looked at the outsourcing issue and compared it to the internal options, it found that net savings were broadly the same – whilst the savings were high, the costs too were also high. As a result, the following were being proposed:

- to exercise the break clause in the contract with Capita in regard to the delivery of IT services;
- not to extend the partnership with Capita in relation to the Business Transformation service;
- tender IT Services contract;
- not to outsource back office services but instead deliver an in-house savings programme with a view to producing savings of £2m year on year.

Cabinet was informed of the extensive consultation that had taken place with the staff, unions and schools, and that there had been a cross-party consensus on the way forward, which was confirmed by a Non-Voting Non-

Executive Member who expressed his support for the Project and the outcomes proposed.

The Portfolio Holder applauded the Corporate Director of Resources and his team for the work undertaken which had helped to put the Resources Directorate on track to deliver the savings required over the coming years.

Having considered the confidential appendices, Cabinet

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the analysis, evaluation and findings of the options considered within Section 2 of the report be noted;
- (2) the exercise of the early break clause within the Incremental Partnership Agreement variation for the provision of IT Services to permit cessation from 24 November 2015 be approved;
- (3) the Council does not extend the initial period of the Incremental Partnership Agreement currently scheduled to expire on 3 October 2015;
- (4) the re-tender of the IT Service contract under EU Procurement rules and in accordance with Contract Standing Orders be approved and authority to proceed with the procurement be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources and the Portfolio Holder for Finance. and to bring a contract award recommendation to Cabinet for commencement of the IT Service contract; the delivery of the IT Service would require the delivery of major projects from time to time and this would need to be accommodated within the service scope of the re-tender;
- (5) having approved resolution 4 above, approval be given to run the process to appoint a Legal and Commercial provider for the re-tender of the IT Service;
- (6) the Corporate Director of Resources be authorised to continue exploring the potential for a shared service arrangement with suitable partners;
- (7) the launch of a two-year cost reduction programme aimed at achieving a savings target of 17% (i.e. £2.0m per annum) identified from the options analysis in sub-section 2.2.1 of the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: The Council had a balanced budget for 2013/14 and 2014/15 which included the delivery of a total level of savings of £22.8m over the two years. However, the current national 'austerity' measures were anticipated to continue potentially up to 2020 and possibly beyond. The Council therefore needed to plan for further potential cost reduction challenges that were anticipated in addition to the £75.0m of savings it would

have achieved between 2010 and 2015 (out of a controllable spend of approximately £188.0m).

Current projections were that the Council would need to achieve savings representing 30% of its budget between 2015 and 2020.

Concurrently, with the above, the Council's existing outsourced IT Service contract with Capita contained a break clause permitting an early cessation of the contract from October 2015, if exercised.

In recognition of the above, Project Minerva was launched during 2013 to undertake an evaluation of options available to contribute towards anticipated cost reductions including the following activities:

- determine a baseline revenue budget position;
- perform an informal "soft" market test;
- London Authority research;
- Shared Services research;
- discussions with relevant software providers;
- engagement with clients (of the Resources Directorate);
- engagement with Schools; and
- engagement with Staff and Trade Unions.

Additionally, consideration had been given to the potential for service disruption, financial implications, risks, benefits and outcomes for the options set out within Section 2 of this report.

Following analysis and evaluation of the available options incorporating the above factors, the recommendations were proposed and approved by Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

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

769. Key Decision - Council Insurance Renewals 2014

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance and Assurance, which provided an overview and the outcome of the competitive tendering process undertaken to seek new contracts through the Insurance London Consortium (ILC) for the provision of Property and Liability insurance.

Having considered the confidential appendix, Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the award of the contracts for Property and Liability Insurance from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2019 as specified in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: Harrow was committed to the procurement of its external insurance arrangements through the Insurance London Consortium

(ILC) under the terms of a Section 101 Agreement signed by the Leader of the Council.

An open tender process was conducted according to EU procurement rules for Part A Service contracts.

A pre-defined evaluation model was constructed to fairly evaluate each tender against a set of criteria established by the ILC and their appointed insurance brokers.

The bidders detailed in Appendix 1 to the report achieved the highest total scores in the evaluation process.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: To ensure cover. As set out in the report.

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

770. Key Decision - Senior Management Structure

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance Services, which set out the recent consultation on the deletion of the post of the Chief Executive and revised membership of the Corporate Strategy Board. The report sought a decision on a proposed new Senior Management Structure.

The Leader of the Council referred to the Report of the Scrutiny Review Group on 'Deletion of the Post of Chief Executive to the Council' and invited its Chairman to address Cabinet in accordance with the Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group thanked all those who had participated and supported the Review Group, particularly the Scrutiny Manager for her hard work and research in regard to the subject matter.

The Chairman of the Review Group added that the report accepted the need for change but not the specific change in question. There was a need for ongoing changes in order to meet the growing financial pressures on local authorities. Change had been the norm which had been driven by senior officers in partnership with the Members, staff and unions. He added that colleagues who had participated in the Review Group had had differing views; some saw it as an excellent way of saving money and others felt that it was an imposition of a senior management structure that would inhibit change and partnership working. He reflected on the report and explained that whilst there had been consensus on the report produced by the Review Group, the Review Group had initially been looking to issue two separate reports. However, as Chairman of the Review Group, he had been challenged but had been determined that a consensus was possible.

The Leader of the Council responded to questions from non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members and stated that:

- she had recognised that a weaker Leader would need support from a Chief Executive. However, she was a strong and confident Leader who had an excellent rapport with the Head of Paid Service and they would continue working in partnership. She could not comment on the requirements of an incoming administration who may need a Chief Executive costing £250k of residents' money;
- partnership working and pooling of resources was the way forward during these challenging times and she looked forward to new ways of working;
- as the Leader of the Council, she had complied with the necessary legal requirements when considering the need for the post of a Chief Executive. It was within her purview to take a decision on the post.

A non-Executive non-voting Cabinet Member was concerned at the lack of consultation and debate on this key role within the Council and the limited information that had been made available to other Members. He did not support what he considered was an authoritarian style of leadership.

The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources disagreed with these sentiments and drew attention to the Review Group's report which referred to a number of local authorities looking at alternatives to their senior management structures. He stressed that the administration was within its right to look at staffing at all levels during these challenging times and in order to ensure front line services remained intact. It was particularly important to explore how frontline services could be delivered effectively. The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Regeneration cited an example of the Greater London Authority which has not looked back since deleting the post of the Chief Executive.

The Leader of the Council responded to questions on the manner in which the matter was being handled, the pace of the decision, and concerns over a lack of process and consultation. The Leader re-iterated that difficult decisions had to be taken and nothing should be left unturned in order to deliver key services. She was not perturbed with taking difficult decisions but accepted that Members had a right to express their views. The Deputy Leader of the Council stated that all structures and expenditure needed to be examined and challenged to ensure that they were fit for purpose.

The Leader of the Council responded to additional questions about the monitoring arrangements of the proposed new structure. She explained that all the Portfolio Holders would continue working closely with the Corporate Directors and that these relationships would be a useful source of feedback on the impact of the new structure. She noted that the Review Group's report expressed a number of concerns but that she was enthused by change and stressed the importance of making decisions in a timely fashion. She also drew attention to the concerns expressed in the Scrutiny Review of the previous restructure in 2011, arguing that this suggested an inherent reluctance of some Members to accept changes in senior management.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group thanked the Leader for the contribution she had made at a meeting of the Review Group and hoped that Cabinet would not vote to delete the post. He stated that it was important that Members set policy and officers set the process for its implementation, as micro-management was not good business.

In conclusion, the Leader of the Council stated that it would be for the incoming administration in May 2014 to propose a different structure if they wished but she was confident in the structure proposed. Whilst acknowledging that changes brought challenges with them, she was not perturbed by making changes which needed to be made.

The Leader of the Council thanked all Members for their comments.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the post of Chief Executive be deleted from the Council's management structure with effect from 1 March 2014;
- (2) changes to the Senior Management Structure as set out at appendix 2 of the report be agreed.

Reason for Decision: To clarify the Council's senior management arrangements and budget position.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

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

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 8.32 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SUSAN HALL
Chairman