

CABINET – 11 DECEMBER 2014

PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM 4)

Under Rule 16 of the Executive Procedure Rules, members of the public may question the Executive and Portfolio Holders at meetings. There is a time limit of 15 minutes for the asking and answering of public questions.

1.

Questioner: Rosalyn Neale

Asked of: Councillor Sue Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Community, Culture and Resident Engagement

Question: “Has any analysis been done, and if so what, to show the impact the proposed cuts to the Voluntary Service will make, bearing in mind the additional value which they undoubtedly provide to the community?”

2.

Questioner: Tim Owen, The Pinner Association

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

Question: “This is a question about Pinner Park Farm.

In the Supreme Court the London Borough of Haringey recently lost a case which was all about public consultation. The subject matter of the consultation was different to Pinner Park Farm, but the principles are equally applicable. The Supreme Court held that Haringey’s consultation was unlawful because it did not tell local people what all the options were, misleadingly implied that there were no possible alternatives, and gave no information about why the Council had decided to implement their choice. Last summer’s consultation on the future of Pinner Park Farm had the same deficiencies.

Question 3 in the consultation asked “Which option do you prefer? The two possible responses listed were for Option 1 (a Country Park) or Option 2 (a more sophisticated Country Park). Faced with this limited choice of answers no less than 53% of respondents chose an answer that was not even listed, namely for the farm to remain. To suggest, as the consultation report

does, that this was a result of lobbying and misinformation insults the intelligence of the voters who elected your administration.

In the light of the Supreme Court decision and the freely expressed view of the consultees, will the Council put the development of the plans for a country park on hold and re-run the consultation exercise giving the people of Harrow a proper choice of alternatives and full information on the benefits and the consequences of each and, if not, then why not?"

3.

Questioner: John Nickolay

Asked of: Councillor Simon Brown, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Young People

Question: "It is clear from the report by the officers in Agenda item 8 that they did not agree with the Governors of both Welldon Park Junior & Infant Schools (*which are unique in Harrow and rare in most of London by being on separate sites*) when they rejected a well-considered and researched recommendation by a joint Governing Body that amalgamation was not appropriate and which matched the results of the consultation process among parents/carers/residents, staff members and themselves. Can the PFH please explain why this time the officers have failed to identify and explain to Cabinet the obvious problems of amalgamating schools that are not on the same site which was the main reason for the Cabinet decision in 2009 *not* to amalgamate these schools in their unique and difficult situation?"

4.

Questioner: Raksha Pandya, Mind in Harrow

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Major Contracts

Question: "Harrow Council Administration has stated repeatedly in public meetings for the Take Part consultation that they want to have an honest and transparent dialogue with the Harrow voluntary & community sector about the Council's savings plan 2015/16 and future years. At the meeting on 25th November 2014 the

Administration announced that the voluntary sector funding was proposed to be reduced by 9.5% next year 2015/16 totalling £550,000 and produced a list of Council voluntary sector funding including 'Children and Families' and 'Health (Public Health)' totalling £5,761,620. However, in the Council's own 'Savings Factsheet' for the Take Part consultation on the Council's website, only 'Adult Social Care' and Grants are included in the definition of 'Cut funding provided to the voluntary sector' and on page 20 of 11th December 2014 Cabinet meeting Supplemental Agenda £550,000 is set against a budget of £1,755,000 voluntary sector funding, which also appears only to include Adult Social Care and Grants. Therefore, the Administration appears not to have been transparent and honest because the actual proposed cut to Adult Social Care local voluntary & community sector services for the most vulnerable Harrow residents 2015/16 is 31%, which is a disproportionate cut for the first year of the Council's savings plan. The Administration appears to be attempting to cover up the fact that they have breached their Election Manifesto Commitments to safeguard services for the most vulnerable and at risk Harrow residents, to ensure a sustainable voluntary & community sector and to promote volunteering.

Will the Portfolio for Finance admit that either that he has not been transparent and honest with vulnerable service users about proposed cuts to their services or can he confirm that the cut to Adult Social Care & Grants funding to the voluntary sector 2015/16 will be limited to 9.5% as clearly implied at 25th November 2014?"

5.

Questioner: Jaqueline Hooper

Asked of: David Perry, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Corporate Leadership

Question: "The Council will not be make a final decision about its budget 2015/16 until the full Council meeting at the end of February 2015 and therefore will not be able to notify formally voluntary organisations about reductions to funding 2015/16 until after that meeting. In order for the Administration to act responsibly and enable voluntary sector organisations to manage any potential service reductions for vulnerable service users, will he commit to give at least 3 months' notice to all voluntary sector organisations affected by budget cuts 2015/16 following the final

budget decision at end of February full Council meeting, i.e. notice to the of June 2015?”

6.

Questioner: Davis Searles

Asked of: Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Crime and Community Safety

Question: “As a Harrow Councillor you will be aware that Harrow the highest proportion of low paid jobs in London therefore can you as the responsible Portfolio Holder please explain why all the proposed cuts for Enterprise and Environment in Labour’s draft budget are directed at frontline operational staff with the intention to either remove or downgrade low paid staff even further?”

7.

Questioner: J Welby

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Major Contracts

Question: “Are the figure of £75million the exact amount that the Council is losing as this figure does not explain the cutback in services this amount will have on residents of Harrow?”