

Cabinet – 19 March 2016 – Questions not reached at Cabinet

9.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

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

Question: The draft constitution for park user Groups at Appendix 2 states that councillors will be appointed to some of these groups by Cabinet. What criteria/processes will Cabinet be using to make these appointments?

Written Response: This will be done through Democratic Services. They will follow the same robust criteria that they use for appointing members to outside bodies to ensure a mix of representation. Preference will be given to local ward Members.

10.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

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

Question: Given the sizeable cuts made in the budget to park maintenance, what discussions have you as portfolio holder had with the existing park user groups – particularly about the evolving nature of their potential responsibilities?

Written Response: Members and officers have been having informal discussions but we need an operational framework agreed by Cabinet (and this is on tonight's agenda). Once approved we will start the formal discussions with these groups.

11.

Questioner: Councillor Susan Hall

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

Question: Could you provide a month-by-month breakdown of the number of complaints the Council has received – either online, in writing or via Access Harrow – regarding missed, incorrect or otherwise flawed bin collections, since September 2014?

Written Response: Yes. I can provide you with a detailed tabulation split by these

Response: complaint types, but in summary we have received an average of 21 complaints per month since September 2014, making a total of 147 to date.

To put this in context, we make over 500,000 bin lifts a month (72,000 households x 8 bins emptied per month), so this is a tiny fraction – 99.99%.

12.

Questioner: Councillor Janet Mote

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

Question: Can you confirm if the Cabinet recommendation regarding a reduced parking charge trial in Cambridge Road car park has been discussed by the Regeneration Board and, if so, what the outcome of those deliberations was?

Written Response: The recommendation was discussed at the Regeneration Board on 26th February and it was agreed that a proposal to review the charges at Cambridge Road car park as part of the planned review of fees and charges, and in light of information obtained through the regular vitality assessments.

13.

Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

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

Question: What discussions have you had as portfolio holder with the voluntary sector since the release of the consultation results?

Written Response: I and my officers held a consultation feedback meeting with the Voluntary and Community Sector to outline the key results of the consultation. Around 10 organisations attended.

14.

Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

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

Question: Why was the decision made to protect the funding for certain community festivals, following the voluntary sector consultation?

Written Response: We felt that these festivals help to promote community cohesion in the borough at little costs to the Council. These events include for example Holocaust Memorial Day which I am sure we would all agree is an important event to mark. We also believe that by working in partnership with faith and community organisations, our funding will help to 'match' funding from other sources to deliver a programme.

15.

Questioner: Councillor James Bond

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

Question: "What will be the running costs of organising transport to take residents from the libraries that will be closed to other libraries that remain open and how will the frequency of such transport be determined?"

Written Response: This is outlined in the Cabinet report in front of you in paragraph 6.2. We will trial a community transport offer between closed libraries and Gayton Library (or the next nearest library) for a period of three months – this is estimated to cost about £5k for three months. This includes two trips per week for each of the closed libraries.

16.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: Can you clarify what conversations have you, the P/H, had with Carillion in drawing up the Library Strategy?

Written Response: I have been closely personally involved in the drawing up of the Library Strategy. I have put considerable personal commitment into the engagement of library users and stakeholders. I have ensured that officers briefed Trade Unions and had meetings with Carillion (our contractor) and had regular feedback on the progress of those discussions.

17.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: What discussions have you, the P/H, had with Carillion with respect to the potential staff redundancies and library closures?

Written Response: I have been closely personally involved in the drawing up of the Library Strategy. I have put considerable personal commitment into the engagement of library users and stakeholders. I have ensured that officers had meetings with Carillion (our contractor) and had regular feedback on the progress of those discussions. Carillion have given us the information in the Cabinet report on the potential level of staff redundancies and we have been in discussion with them on the library closures.

18.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: What discussions have you, the P/H, had with the unions over potential staff redundancies in the libraries?

Written Response: I have been closely personally involved in the drawing up of the Library Strategy. I have put considerable personal commitment into the engagement of library users and stakeholders. I have ensured that officers briefed Trade Unions and had regular feedback on the progress of those discussions. In addition, I have personally had informal discussions with Unison.

19.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: Given the poor management of the Capita contract, can you provide certainty that there is sufficient contract management expertise and resources in place to manage the Council's contractual relationship with Carillion, to protect and improve the library services that will continue for our residents and to ensure the Council's financial and reputational interests are protected, through what is likely to be a very difficult period?

Written Response: The Library management contract has been in place for the past eighteen months. In that time officers have closely monitored performance through weekly monthly and quarterly meetings in partnership with colleagues in Ealing. The performance of the contract is also monitored through regular briefings with myself, the Council's contract board and through Scrutiny. I am clear that we have the proper processes in place to manage the contract.

20.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: How many actual job losses are expected, as opposed to deletion of posts currently filled by temps or where reassignment elsewhere within Carillion is unlikely?

Written Response: The Cabinet report outlines the number of posts at risk. It is too early to confirm the number of actual redundancies as there will be due process to ascertain the final outcome.

21.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: According to paragraph 9.2, the MTFS “identifies a reduction in the library budget of £500,00pa”, i.e. £50k rather than the £500k touted elsewhere; given the importance of the issue, how many other typos are there and how much reliance can we place on the numbers in this report?

Written Response: I thank Cllr MacLeod-Cullinane for pointing out one error in a detailed report and appendices. I will make sure this is corrected.

22.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

Question: Your Library Strategy betrays a distinct poverty of ambition: whereas other authorities are refurbishing and opening new libraries, Harrow’s Labour administration seems intent on hastening their decline; so, why do you believe that your Library Strategy can either “halt or reduce the rate of decline” in our much-loved libraries?

Written Response: The Library Strategy clearly outlines our ambition for a new library in the town centre and potentially in Roxeth and Pinner and a programme of refurbishment starting at Stanmore. It also outlines that we will take up other opportunities as they arise. A planning application for a new central library as part of a mixed development on College Road has already been submitted. If

this is approved, this will see the first new library in Harrow for more than twenty years and will be a state of the art 21st Century facility.

23.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources and Policy Development

Question: In the light of the governance issues (identified in the independent report commission by Barnet Council), which arose between Harrow and Barnet regarding the shared legal service agreement, can you give me your assurance that similar or more serious errors will not occur as a result of the further sharing with Buckinghamshire?

Written Response: Yes.

24.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources and Policy Development

Question: Given your disastrous IT outsourcing to Capita, can you give me your personal assurance that it will work this time around?

Written Response: In 2010, we inherited an IT system that was not compatible with a modern and large organisation that is there to serve the public.

The lack of investment, coupled with a fragmented organisational structure, meant that IT had a poor reputation within the organisation and did not conform to ITIL best practices

It had reached a point where this lack of investment was hampering the Council's transformation plans – which included further rolling out remote and mobile working, significantly reducing the office footprint, and centralising and streamlining functions such as customer contact and administration.

We were advised that an options appraisal had taken place in early 2009, which included the option of an 'in house' solution. A Request for Proposal for IT service delivery had been submitted to Capita; their response had been received and evaluated, which was shown to be more costly than had been expected. This was clearly due to the lack of previous investment in the service and the need to deliver an integrated solution

incorporating a wide range of benefits to the organisation.

In 2010, we instigated an immediate review of the IT service that highlighted a number of concerns which were considered to be a constraint to the future transformation of Council services. Especially as it was essential that the IT capability was to underpin transformation.

For example:-

- No clear ICT Strategy in place.
- No clear ownership
- A limited capacity to support remote and flexible working
- The lack of a disaster recovery system, which had led to the Data Centre in Civic 1 being a single point of failure
- High usage of Agency staff and consultants.
- 95% of equipment at end of life, out of support and operating at an unacceptably high risk of failure
- A fragmented infrastructure that affected reliability and was difficult to adapt to new technology
- An email system (Groupwise) that was difficult to support and integrate with other key systems.
- Extremely limited support for hand held devices (eg Blackberrys).

In addition, there was no consistent approach across the Council in relation to IT service delivery.

A major upgrade of our IT was required and the decision to outsource this to Capita in 2010 was the right decision.

It must also be remembered that an in-house option was also developed in order to make a comparison with the Capita proposal. This showed that in order to deliver the same level of service, the Council would have to spend a comparable amount but the option involved greater risk in relation to its delivery.

A robust contract was put in place that aligned to the existing Capita contract for Business Transformation.

That contract has been robustly managed even if the partner's delivery has not met our expectations. We are still dealing with an IT upgrade programme that is over two years late and the impact of that on the organisation is well documented. The risks associated with delivery have however been Capita's and the programme is still fixed price.

We launched Project Minerva in early 2013 to review the delivery of a number of back office services. This review was undertaken on a cross party basis. Recommendations were brought to Cabinet in 2014 again on a cross party basis and the decision was taken not to extend the contract with Capita but to go back to the market for ICT.

The procurement strategy, timeline, evaluation criteria and ICT strategy were all agreed again on a cross party basis in May 2014 in order for the procurement process to get underway. The policy for the re-procurement of ICT was therefore set at this time and the process has run since then to deliver on that policy and bring a recommendation to let a contract back to Cabinet.

Clearly many lessons have been learned from the first generation outsourcing that we have all been able to build in to this approach. We have also been able to benefit from advances in technology and what the market is able to deliver. The contractual mechanisms have also moved on in the last ten years and afford the Council a wider range of options should there be service level issues in the future.

The contract with Capita also includes a clear exit strategy which is currently being enacted.

25.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson, Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources and Policy Development

Question: Will any IT jobs be taken away from the borough as a result of the new contract; if so, how many, and where?

Written Response: The recommended bidder has stated that there will be no redundancies and that all staff on the TUPE list will be retained. They have indicated that they would expect to keep all jobs in Harrow for at least the first two years of the contract, working on either normal business activities or the transition and transformation projects. After this period the number of jobs required on site will depend upon the level of ongoing project activity.

Transferring staff will however have the opportunity to apply for development opportunities within the new organisation and these may or may not be in Harrow. In addition it is of course always possible that staff members may resign. In both of these cases a decision on whether to fill the post with a job based in Harrow will be made based on need.

Furthermore the new contract includes a number of commitments to the local community about providing apprenticeships, work experience, work placements, the creation of local jobs and a commitment to paying the London Living Wage and having no zero hours contracts.