

## CABINET – 10 DECEMBER 2015

### 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:** Ruth Catty

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

**Question:** Funding of breastfeeding support services from the Public Health budget

“Harrow Council’s website proudly reports the UNICEF reaccreditation of Harrow Community Health Services’ Baby Friendly Community status in August this year, saying that Harrow is now one of the best boroughs in London for mothers to access breastfeeding help.

Harrow is the only borough in NW London to have achieved this status.

UNICEF have highlighted Harrow as an example of best practice, saying “Harrow Community Services and Northwick Park Hospital are examples of where joint investment in support services for women has translated into higher breastfeeding rates and reduced illness in babies”.

The breastfeeding support available includes drop-in groups every weekday run by a network of trained volunteer peer supporters, who also provide online, telephone, and one-to-one support outside of the groups. Hundreds of hours of expert support are given to mothers by these volunteers, with corresponding significant improvements in health outcomes for both mothers and babies.

As one of the best evidence-based interventions to reduce health inequalities, can the Cabinet please confirm that the funding to continue supporting this high value-for-money service is protected for the period of this Medium Term Financial Strategy that it is considering today?”

2.

**Questioner:** Raksha Pandya, Mind in Harrow

**Asked of:** Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing

**Question:** “How did you decide to propose to end the following Physical Activity programmes: Exercise on Referral – Leisure Centre, Aspire Exercise & Sherwood Clinic, Mental Health Personal Trainers and Health Trainers Cardiac Exercise on Referral?”

3.

**Questioner:** Shambhu Gupta

**Asked of:** Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing

**Question:** “Will there be increased pressure on the family GP and the local hospitals after the health visitor service is cut?”

4.

**Questioner:** Clare Castell, NCT Antenatal Teacher

**Asked of:** Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing

**Question:** Proposed cuts to the Child Health Budget

“Increasing breastfeeding rates modestly could cut **childhood obesity** dramatically. UNICEF estimate a saving of £4 billion nationally (UNICEF 2012).  
Prevention is more cost effective than interventions after it has occurred.

Can Harrow Council ensure that the funding for Breastfeeding in Harrow will continue?”

5.

**Questioner:** Kate White

**Asked of:** Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing

**Question:** “As commissioning responsibility for health visiting services were only transferred to the Council in October, it is clear that the

Council will not have had sufficient time to consult with relevant stakeholders, consider options for mitigation, consult with service users, and assess how this cut would impact on the local community in comparison to possible cuts in other areas. It is out of keeping with international acknowledgement (see e.g. Michael Marmot and the WHO) of the need to invest in people from the youngest age possible, and the clear economic and social benefits of doing so.

How can the Council justify making this decision when it has clearly not had the opportunity to fully think this through, particularly when it is so out of keeping with local, national and international strategy?"

6.

**Questioner:** Helen Fairfax

**Asked of:** Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Equality and Wellbeing

**Question:** "Harrow has the highest number of people at risk suffering from diabetes type 2 in the UK ( Steer, K 2015). Exclusive breastfeeding can reduce the conversion rate from pregnancy - induced diabetes to Type 2 by 60% (Gunderson E. 2015) Can you reassure Harrow residents that there will continue to be on demand support for women to exclusively breastfeed their babies longer than the first six weeks post partum."