

CABINET – 8 DECEMBER 2016

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS (ITEM 5)

Written Responses to Questions 13 – 21 not reached at the meeting.

13.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “How and when will the administration address the Peer Review’s criticism that administration is “not looking at the wider ‘Place’ agenda, such as how the borough will look and feel in the future, how infrastructure will develop around key sites, and how the works will be phased”?”

Written Response: The regeneration plan will build a better Harrow. Plans have been formulated to implement the established Local Plan for the Borough, as set out in the adopted Core Strategy and the Heart of Harrow Area Action Plan. These documents set out a broad placemaking vision for the Borough, and for the Heart of Harrow area, which was the subject of extensive consultation prior to its adoption by the Council.

14.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “The LGA’s Peer process usually sees a return visit in 12-24 months after a review. However, given the significant projected overspend for 2016/17 that emerged in Q1 and which has worsened in Q2, an overspend that suggests an inadequate budget-setting process for 2016/17, will the administration be asking for that return visit to be earlier rather than later, at 12 months rather than waiting for 24 months?”

Written Response: We will give consideration to when the most appropriate time for a return visit of the peer review team might be. It will depend in large part on the action plan that we put together working with scrutiny and the progress we make against

this.

15.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “Given the Peer Review reported how Scrutiny is seen as “ineffective, with limited opportunity to invite challenge or make a constructive contribution to policy making”, observing that “there is no effective cabinet forward plan for decision-making” which makes it “difficult to plan timely pre-decision scrutiny”, do you now regret not taking the administration’s Regeneration Plans to Scrutiny before passing them?”

Written Response: Given the peer review has been referred to scrutiny to consider, I hope that this process will come forward with ways to make scrutiny even more effective.

16.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “When you were Portfolio Holder for Finance, you explained to the Performance & Finance Committee that you were “relaxed about not meeting particular savings if compensatory savings could be found elsewhere in the directorate”; is this still your view?”

Written Response: The compensatory savings can either be in the same directorate or from other directorates.

17.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “As the Peer Review highlights, the Regeneration Plans require a modal shift away from the car to other transport options; how does your administration expect to effect this modal shift?”

Written Response: We have to accept that driving is sometimes the only real option for some residents. However, a significant number of residents could utilise alternative transport for part or all of their travel.

The Council’s Transport Local Implementation Plan sets out our high level objectives for all modes of transport and details our policy on encouraging modal shift to sustainable transport modes including walking, cycling and public transport. We will be revising the Council’s transport implementation plan following the launch of the new Mayor’s Transport Strategy and that will be an opportunity to develop new policies to further encourage and promote sustainable transport modes.

We have recently launched Harrow’s Cycling Strategy which sets out our cycling objectives and targets and actions that will lead to better and safer cycling connections between key origins and destinations. Our roll out of traffic schemes ensure a continuous improvement to the public realm making it safer and more pleasant to walk in the borough. And we are lobbying heavily for improvements to public transport in the borough which is a proven way of encouraging modal shift. You will have seen the recent announcement by the Mayor of London naming Harrow on the Hill as a station to get step free access in the near future.

I am very pleased that the Labour Mayor of London has announced funding to allow step free access to Harrow on the Hill station, something the previous Tory Mayor was not able to do.

18.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “Given the “contract prices being higher than anticipated” for Special Needs Transport and other contracts encountering similar problems, does the council have sufficient capacity (including resources and expertise) within its contract management teams?”

Written Response: It is important to be clear, as far as comparisons will allow, that Harrow provides the lowest cost per head in the transport of children to school settings in the West London Area. The rising cost of SEN transport is driven by rising demand. This is true not only in Harrow but across London and in many authorities nationally.

19.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “Following your comments at full council, will additional resources be directed to HIV and AIDS services and will additional funding be made available to other connected services like drug and alcohol treatment?”

Written Response: Initiatives to tackle HIV and Aids are vital. While money might not always be available, we will always do what we can to help.

20.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question: “Given the continued and significant slippages in the

council's overall Capital Programme, what assurances can be given that the components of the Regeneration Plans funded by the administration's corporate borrowing will come in on time and on/under budget?"

**Written
Response:**

The regeneration programme will be managed effectively. This includes detailed project and programme monitoring, through a regular Programme Board, detailed highlight reporting and day to day project and programme management through an experienced programme management unit.

21

Questioner:

Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of:

Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution

Question:

"Given the Regeneration Division's own forecast to spend just £10.708m against a budget of £22.16m, mainly due to £8.992m of slippage due to "unavoidable delays, relating to land assembly, planning outcomes and unpredictable approval delays to procurement processes", does the council have the capacity to deliver your administration's Regeneration Plans, including the council component of £356m?"

**Written
Response:**

The Council does have the capacity to deliver the regeneration programme successfully, having invested over the past two years in the creation of the Harrow Regeneration Unit.