

CABINET – THURSDAY 11 OCTOBER 2018

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS (ITEM 5)

[Written Responses to Questions 12 – 16 not reached at the meeting]

12.

Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

Asked of: Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Question: “Why is there an apparent spate of bollards being installed in the Borough by or in front of the entries to residents’ properties?”

Response: Where there is evidence of vehicles overrunning verges or footways illegally resulting in damage to the highway, then bollards may be introduced to prevent vehicles accessing these areas. This is done routinely whenever the Council is undertaking major footway renewal programmes or where specific problems with highway damage are reported to the Council by the public. The cost of repairing highway damage is significant and so where repairs are made, quite often protection measures may also be introduced to safeguard the highway from future damage. This type of work is intended to reduce the cost burden of repairing unnecessary and preventable damage to the highway so that the limited resources available can be dedicated to maintaining routine highway defects and deterioration to ensure the highway is kept safe.

13.

Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

Asked of: Councillor Krishna Suresh, Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Crime

Question: “What approach do you favour to the supply and possession of controlled drugs in Harrow?”

Response: I want to keep all Harrow residents safe from the impact of illegal drugs so I am therefore supportive of all steps that are taken to reduce the risk to our residents of getting involved in or taking drugs. The police are carrying out active operations to make sure those dealing drugs are dealt with appropriately, ensuring that the evidence they gather helps make sure that these people will serve prison sentences, and not come back on our streets for a very long time.

As an example, we commission Westminster Drugs Project to deliver the Harrow Adult Substance Misuse Service. This service not only delivers support to addicts and those needing support, but also works closely with criminal justice partners to reduce offending across the board, for example working with the police to provide generic intelligence to promote better targeting of drug dealing hotspots.

Ultimately, I would like us to be able to provide more support for those that become inflicted by drug addiction as well as enforcing those that deal in drugs. However, with the level of funding cuts the Council and the Police are having to face, this is extremely difficult.

14.

Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

Asked of: Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Question: "What is the Council's policy on how pavements in the Borough are to be re-surfaced?"

Response: Footway reconstruction programmes are developed on the basis of annual condition surveys undertaken to an agreed UK pavement management assessment system. The surveys are reviewed in accordance with the principles of the Council's highway asset management strategy to determine the maintenance priorities for the year. As far as practicable, the Council will produce a targeted programme of works that takes account of the condition surveys, traffic usage, reactive maintenance history and any other identified risks. The aim is to achieve the maximum benefit from the resources available so that the longevity of the Council's footways Borough-wide are maximised and the speed of deterioration and any future maintenance costs are minimised.

15.

Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

Asked of: Councillor Adam Swersky, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Question: "How much has Infinity cost the Council directly and indirectly so far?"

Response: Project Infinity is a key part of the adult social care team's ambitious efforts to empower people to make their own decisions about the care that works best for them. This

effort has won us plaudits in parliament for encouraging many more organisations and individuals to offer different types of care and provision. Beyond this, the systems we have put in place have cut out wasteful bureaucracy and reduced costs – our estimates indicate a 7% saving on the relevant spend each year.

To build on this, we partnered with IBM's Watson team in 2016 to develop a state of the art product that would take this approach even further, creating a platform for integration with health and enabling us to commercialise the system for use by other areas. As of March 2018, we have invested a total of £692k in this partnership, of which £226k was capital and £466k was revenue. These costs consist primarily of staff time as well as some of the up-front costs of partnership development. These costs represent a fraction of the total amount invested by IBM in the development of the product and are offset against the savings delivered by our personalisation agenda. While we have taken a conservative view and removed income targets from the budget, we continue to work with IBM towards making the product a commercial success and generating future income for the Council.

16.

Questioner: Councillor Chris Mote

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships, Devolution and Customer Services

Question: "Why is Harrow Council asking the public to donate to various causes in the Borough?"

Response: Over the past few years the council has faced some very serious financial challenges so cannot support the community in the way it used to so we are looking at alternative ways of raising monies to support local initiatives that the community value. Our strategy for supporting the voluntary sector is to work with them to develop better ways of raising money. We fund Harrow Community Action to support the VCS to better raise new ways of funding, and are now in the second year of CrowdFund Harrow, our crowdfunding platform, which last year raised over £3 for every £1 of Council investment.

At Cabinet in November we also hope to agree our approach to set up a Community Lottery which will be another way of raising monies locally for voluntary

groups. Given the reality of our budget situation, as a Council we believe this is the right way forward, to ensure as many great local causes are supported, as ultimately this will have a positive impact on our residents, which is what all of us in the Council want.
