

CABINET – 21 FEBRUARY 2019

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 FEBRUARY 2019

MINUTE 45 - Corporate Plan 2019/2020

The Committee considered a report on the 2019/20 Corporate Plan which set out the key priorities, activities and outcomes for the next year and the progress that had been made against these to date. It was noted that Cabinet would be considering the Corporate Plan on 21 February 2019 prior to submission to full Council on 28 February 2019 for formal adoption.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Performance, Corporate Resources and Customer Services, introduced the report, stating that it sat alongside the final Revenue Budget 2019-20 and outlined what the Council intended to do and how those actions and services would be funded. Particular attention was drawn to the five priorities set out in the Executive Summary and narrative which highlighted that Harrow was one of the lowest funded Councils in London and the major issues around deprivation, care costs and homelessness. He commented on the limited funding and significant pressures and that Harrow provided services at minimum cost and was doing it well. He thanked the officers for the work undertaken in the preparation of the document. He drew particular attention to:

- successful bids for external funding, however such monies were often time limited;
- the delivery plan which set out the key projects and initiatives to be undertaken together with progress to date would enable scrutiny to ensure that resources were appropriately targeted and benefited the right people at the right time.

The Chief Executive advised that the Corporate Plan set out the aims of Harrow Council at the highest strategic level and provided a good summary for residents. He indicated that scrutiny would be welcomed over the coming year.

A Member referred to the £1.75bn of public and private investment in the regeneration programme and sought information on the proportion of public investment, the envisaged spend in 2019/20 and which regeneration projects would be funded in 2019/20. The Leader of the Council undertook that the information on the amount of public investment would be provided to the Member. With the exception of the Waxwell Lane and Haslam House schemes, the regeneration strategy was under review to look at risks around fluctuating costs and to identify the borrowing cap and resultant revenue costs. It was noted that Ward Councillors would be notified regarding the Haslam House tender.

A Member expressed disappointment at the lack of reference to Members in the Council's Corporate Values. The Chief Executive supported the inclusion of Members stating that all the best Councils were characteristically strong

and effective political and managerial leaderships which worked together on common objectives. Whilst the purpose of the document was relatively internal facing as to what officers and managers should do to meet the objectives and targets, it was also necessary to reflect partnership work and its achievements for Harrow. The Leader of the Council referred to the non-executive role for a voluntary organisation representative on Harrow's Cabinet as an example of partnership working. The inclusion of reference to Members in the corporate plan was supported.

A Member stated that he was unclear as to the purpose of the Ambition Plan and how it fitted into the Corporate Plan structure. The Member commented that the agenda report referred both to a Corporate Plan and to a Harrow Ambition Plan and that it was a one- year operational plan, not a strategic document. In addition he suggested that, as the regeneration expenditure of £1.75bn did not refer to one year only, a budget horizon of at least three years was more appropriate than a one year financial budget. The Leader of the Council responded that there was no certainty on the budget beyond 2019/20 and that the plans, policies and strategies underneath the Ambition Plan such as the SEND strategy and waste review provided the detailed information. It was noted that the three year Medium Term Financial Strategy indicated what the Council intended to do. The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning advised the Committee that the Council's Constitution called the document the Corporate Plan. It was therefore recognised that narrative was required as to why it was called Harrow's Ambition Plan

A voluntary aided sector representative referred to the objective to deliver new schools and school places and asked how the Council planned to create additional school places after 2020 and whether the places would be in existing secondary schools or whether new schools would be constructed. The Leader of the Council responded that an annual report to Cabinet provided information on projected and actual numbers calculated by use of a number of strategies including the projected ONS figures. The school proposed for the Kodak development site was subject to there being sufficient potential pupils. The bulge classes were heading to secondary school and, whilst there were currently sufficient places, the situation would be monitored and capital investment considered if necessary. The Committee was informed that as Local Authorities could not individually set up new schools work would be undertaken through trusts, free schools or academies or work within existing schools if required.

A Member suggested that the Council needed to increase its partnership work with the police against crime. The Leader of the Council reported that there had been a one third reduction in the police budget. The Council tax precept was being used for additional police. It was hoped that the vacancies in the two dedicated ward officer posts, arising from a high turnover within the Police Force, would be filled by officers completing their training at Hendon Training Centre. The creation of Basic Command Units should provide opportunities for greater collaborations and efficiencies such as specialist burglaries. Monthly meetings took place with the Police.

The Member also expressed concern lest the move to online services, despite the offer of training, result in the disenfranchisement of vulnerable people from using Council services if a totally online system was established. The Committee was advised that the contract with Sopra Steria finished at the end of 2020 and the supplier of MyHarrow was closing. A report to be submitted to Cabinet on the migration would ensure some accessibility by the public, particularly in connection with the most vulnerable.

In response to a question as to how Harrow's Council Tax collection levels in excess of 97% compared with other London Councils, the Leader of the Council stated that Harrow performance was one of the best in London. He advised that as 1% of Council Tax collection equated to £1.2m it was important to remind people robustly but the opportunity for payment plans was provided.

Concern was expressed that the staffing component of the Plan did not explicitly refer to gender or BAME staff. The Leader stressed the commitment made that equality was top of the agenda and that it was recognised that there was always room for improvement. The Chief Executive advised of the inclusion of all the protected characteristics but that the Plan included examples of more recent emphasis. The Committee was advised that generally the workforce reflected the Borough and Community and that in the medium term strategies with regard to representation higher in the management hierarchy would be investigated. The Committee requested that Cabinet include specific reference to equality for gender and BAME staff in the Corporate Plan with targets.

In response to a question relating to Harrow Homes for Harrow People and confusion by residents at the different definitions of affordable homes such as London Affordable Rent, London Living Rent, and the mention of affordable and rent in the Plan, the Leader of the Council explained that the affordability criteria varied between different sites and he undertook to request the officers to circulate the affordable housing list. The Chief Executive added that the list would be helpful due to the quarterly numbers not being included in the Corporate Plan yet as it was the start of the corporate plan process. In addition, when an activity was reported it could indicate the category of the affordable homes. The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning further undertook to include a footnote to the Build a Better Harrow section of the Plan to indicate which definition of affordability applied.

With regard to housing, a Member asked for clarification on the numbers of homes as there was reference in different parts of the Plan to: 5500 new homes, £32 million from City Hall to build 614 new council homes, delivering 2000+ new homes on council owned land and mention of 500 homes over the next 2 years by the Leader when he had spoken to the Committee in January about the draft budget. He asked how many homes would be provided in the next eight to ten years and whether they were all in addition to any private sector building. In addition he asked what the target number of homes was for the Mayor's Homes for Londoners Programme. The Leader of the Council responded that government funding through London Councils was for over 5

years and was a target of 1500 rolling programme. Some sites were Council owned and some provided by developers. The HRA finance would be for 600 homes on infill sites and the Grange Farm development. It was agreed that details of how the different figures given in the report fitted together would be circulated. With regard to the Mayor's Homes for Londoners programme the Council had challenged the basis of one bedroom accommodation as the requirement was for larger properties. The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning stated that it was a London target rather than an ambition set by the Council.

A Member suggested that with regard to 16-24 year olds whilst prevention initiatives were programmed there was not much for this age range to do to occupy their time. The Leader of the Council provided examples of projects by the Harrow Young Foundation and social clubs and events across the borough and questioned whether it might not be the range and location of activities but a lack of advertisement. In addition voluntary organisations were doing exceptionally well looking for gaps in the market and putting in bids for funding. He stated that the challenge was to work better together to stop young people getting into the fringes of gangs. A Member commented that social clubs were not seen as 'cool' or considered to be for those with mental health problems. The Divisional Director, Strategic Commissioning referred to a needs analysis and the piloting of a system to indicate the location of activities by postcode. The general view of the Committee was that engagement and communications were lacking and this should be taken up with voluntary partners. It was noted that some groups were always difficult to engage with.

Members raised a number of questions and received responses as follows:

- Community Infrastructure Levy monies remained in the bank accounts until it was used for a project. There were proposals to simplify the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy;
- the inclusion of additional context and data had to be balanced against readability and the risk that the document became unwieldy. A quarterly Corporate Scorecard report containing RAG (red, amber, green) indicators and quantitative indicators would be submitted to Cabinet. This information could also be included for the Committee in future;
- the aim was to use Harrow People to communicate the high pressures on Adult Services particularly with regard to the health element. There was a need to review how this was communicated;
- A Member commented that, with regard to the proposal to reduce the number of Councillors in Harrow to 55, it could not be put forward as an achievement of the Administration for which it had aimed as it had opposed it and been forced into it. The Leader replied that the Local Government Boundary Commission had made a proposal and as there

was no appeal the Council was considering the implementation. An officer stated that the position would be made clear in the narrative.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet)

That the comments from the Committee on the Corporate Plan be referred to Council.