

CABINET – THURSDAY 9 JANUARY 2020

AGENDA PART 1

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: Charlotte Woodbridge

Asked of: Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Question: On behalf of Extinction Rebellion Harrow, I would like to ask the following question:

'We commend Harrow Council's Declaration of Climate Emergency of July last year, but note that there has not yet been an update of the Council's Climate Change strategy since the Emergency Declaration was made, nor any detail on how these changes will be funded. Taking into account the new commitment to achieve a carbon neutral Borough by 2030 (rather than the previous target of 2050) we request details of what deliverables have been defined and how/when they are planned for implementation? If these deliverables have yet to be defined when does the council plan to do this?'

2.

Questioner: Mr Nigel Long, HAD, CEO,

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

Question: 'Harrow Association of Disabled People welcomes draft proposals, to set a balanced budget in 2020/21 subject to consultation and notes the future funding challenges in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

We recognise that Tory austerity since 2010 continues and that disabled people have been hit very hard by austerity. This was highlighted by the May 2019 United Nations report that said "Disabled people were being driven to breaking point."

We further note that some Harrow Council cuts have hit services to some of the poorest disabled households in the

Borough. We think Council cuts to disabled people have been counterproductive leading to higher homeless and residential care costs as independent living is undermined.

Before Harrow Council cut all funding to the HAD Welfare Benefits service in 2017, HAD brought in over £1.2 million pounds a year into Harrow.

Since the Council cuts, the number of disabled people seeking support from HAD has reduced and with the introduction of modest charges the number seeking help has fallen further. Harrow Council continues to refer disabled people to HAD (despite no Council funding) as does CAB. (Despite it being funded by the Council) To maintain a reduced but high demand service HAD has drawn down £92,000 from reserves in the last two years. In 2019-2020 the projected Welfare Benefits deficit of £40,000 will come out of legacy money gifted to HAD. Council cuts are undermining HADs financial position as HAD tries to protect disabled people.

We would ask the Council to amend its Investment proposals for 2020/21 set out on page 20 of the report by reducing the 7 areas of extra spend by £5,000 each, and allocate £35,000 to HAD to fund its Welfare Benefits service, thus recognising that a full HAD service will bring over £1.2 million pounds into the Borough, thus tackling inequality and supporting independent Living.'

3.

Questioner: Mr Adam Gabsi, Chair of HAD

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

Question: 'Given that Cabinet has chosen to make cuts to services supporting disabled people undermining the policy objective of promoting independent living, HAD would like to offer the Cabinet a second opportunity to fund Welfare Benefits advice for disabled people.

We would ask the Cabinet to reduce the £500,000 extra for cleaning and building repairs on corporate sites (See Annex 1C. Unique reference COM G10) to £465,000 and to allocate £35,000 to the HAD Welfare Benefits service.'

4.

Questioner: Mr Brian Stoker

Asked of: Councillor Graham Henson, Leader of the Council

Question: 'At the 10th October Cabinet meeting I asked a supplementary question about the proposed dinosaur golf development at the Bannister Sports Centre and the Leader offered to provide a written reply.

However the written reply received 25th November from a Corporate Director of the Council totally incorrectly quoted my question, and completely incorrectly quoted from a legal contract signed by the Council, which I corrected in my response.

When will I receive a professional and correct answer to my question?'