

# **Our strategy for Restoring Pride in Harrow 2023-26**

## **One year review**

**Leader's foreword**

**[to be inserted]**

**Cllr Paul Osborn  
Leader, Harrow Council**

## Our Borough – Harrow in numbers **\*\*Infographic to be added in final designed version\*\***

- Harrow has 261,300 residents
- 51% of our population are female, compared to 49% who are men
- 64% of Harrow's population come from a Black, Asian, and Multi-ethnic background
- Average age of Harrow residents: 38 years
- Half of the council's workforce live and work in Harrow
- 169 languages spoken in Harrow schools
- 93% of schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted
- Third lowest unemployment level in West London
- 94% of companies in Harrow are micro-businesses employing less than 10 people
- 15 minutes to central London by train
- 6 Green Flag parks
- One of the safest London Boroughs (along with Richmond and Wandsworth)
- Average house price of £581,321
- Life expectancy of 82.1 years for men and 85.7 years for women
- 10% of Harrow's population have diabetes
- More than 2 and a half million (2,781,213) free hours of parking used by residents in 2023
- Number of visits to the recycling centre throughout 2023 was 175,181

## Vision and priorities

### Restoring Pride in Harrow

In February 2023 we launched our corporate plan outlining how the council would restore pride in Harrow. We identified three priorities, to set out how we would restore pride in Harrow, to make decisions and to drive the services we deliver. These priorities are:



The corporate plan set out the actions we would take during 2023/24 through a series of Flagship Actions to deliver these three priorities and restore pride in Harrow. These Flagship Actions bring the commitments that we have pledged to life and serve to respond to the things that matter to you, our residents, the most.

We committed to publishing additional actions each year of our three-year strategy, reflecting this administration's direction of travel and ambitions. These Flagship Actions are real-life benefits that can be felt across the borough and restore pride in Harrow.

As we are coming to the end of the first year of our strategy, we use this opportunity to reflect on progress made through our initial Flagship Actions (2023/24) and introduce those for the forthcoming year (2024/25).

## **Our customer ethos**

In July 2022 we approved at Cabinet a new Customer Experience Strategy and Action Plan and through this we established a new Customer Ethos for the Council, setting out how we will proactively respond to residents, strive to act as a single organisation and deliver quality services to our residents.

We want Harrow to be a great place to live, work and visit, a place where people are proud to call home, feel safe and supported and where communities flourish.

Putting residents first is at the heart of everything we do. Within this lies a commitment to deliver services and experiences where the wellbeing and needs of our residents are met and are of a high standard.

Building on trust and communications will form even stronger relationships within the community. This will allow us to take great strides in our vision to restore pride, keep our borough clean and safe and support our most vulnerable residents.

By working together with our partners and community groups we can enrich the lives of residents and visitors.

## **Looking back at the last year**

We have made great strides since the launch of our corporate plan last year. We committed to improving our organisation and the way we deliver services to our communities and residents. We also invited a Peer Review Challenge from the Local Government Association in February 2023. Their reflections on how the council is progressing and how it can transform further reinforced our direction of travel and have been aligned into our overall improvement journey. This enables the organisation to be more productive and continue to deliver against the backdrop of financial and resource challenges.

For a borough that puts resident first we are responding to 90% of complaints in 15 working days. Our new consultation platform, MyHarrow Talk, is now much easier for residents to have their say on key decisions in Harrow. Since its launch, more than 24,000 people have visited the site and almost 3,000 people have responded to our consultations (15 held since we launched). Critical to meeting local needs is engaging and working together with local groups, and external stakeholders, including our Voluntary and Community Sector and faith organisations.

To protect our suburbs from tall buildings, we adopted the Supplementary Planning Documents and a new planning portal now gives residents better access to information on proposed developments and more opportunities to have their say. To further demonstrate our

commitment to regeneration across the borough, in January we agreed business cases to develop key council sites through the Harrow Strategic Development Partnership.

In making Harrow a place that is clean and safe, over the last year we have developed strategies to address our climate and sustainability commitments, and some of this is evidenced in our new Flagship Actions.

Over the last twelve months, lots of work has taken place to deliver our key priorities. We have retained our 6 Green Flag Parks and Headstone Manor has separately won an award at the 2023 British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) National Landscape Awards for nature conservation and biodiversity enhancement.

We launched a new witness appeal campaign for fly-tipping using the newly installed mobile CCTV cameras and our brand new CCTV room. Our new recycling team started in October making a significant impact on educating and reducing contamination in our dry recycling. Two planning Days of Action took place to demolish structures and illegal extension with no planning permission. A 3-year partnership community safety strategy was approved to tackle crime in the borough. This includes a series of Weeks of Action for which we have successfully delivered 3 across our hotspot areas. Our joint partnership work with the police has also seen a sharp decline in catalytic converter offences in the last 18 months. 2023 saw a massive drop in these offences, from 407 (December 2022) to 49 (December 2023).

For a borough that supports those in need, we are transforming our offer for children's and adults' services in collaboration with statutory and key partners to make things more joined up for our residents. We have built this into our wider improvement plans to ensure a consistent approach across all sectors that deliver key services.

Last year we launched our carers' strategy which sets out how we support carers. Through this, we have successfully piloted the Conversation Café which helps unpaid carers but is also used as a tool where officers across the council go directly to the very people who need support, and in doing so, resolving their issues in a way we have never done before. We are also supporting local businesses in need of support through employment schemes, networking opportunities and our Harrow Means Business event. We have delivered Make Every Contact Count training to our frontline officers and councillors, which allows us to work in a more joined up way to use opportunities during every day interactions with residents, thinking about how we can make positive improvements to their health and wellbeing. We have also helped 6 apprentices successfully move into permanent roles as social workers, a further boost to help our residents most in need of support.

Without a talented workforce, we would not be able to deliver the hundreds of services we offer residents. Our recent staff awards recognised the great passion, dedication and achievements of staff in areas such as those involved in securing Green Flag parks,

creating the Conversation Café, delivering customer excellence through resolving resident enquiries efficiently and also our commitment to apprenticeship opportunities.

## **Looking ahead to 2024/25**

While this one-year review of the corporate plan looks back at some of our achievements over the past year, we will continue to drive forward our longer-term ambitions through a range of issues that matter to residents.

As a council that puts residents first, we have bold ideas for regeneration in the borough, including redeveloping well-known council-owned plots of land in the heart of Harrow, contributing to the sustainable development of Harrow, fostering a vibrant and inclusive community within the heart of Harrow. We will also be developing a Local Plan for Harrow which will work in partnership to set the context and vision for the borough's infrastructure and wider regeneration.

Our work to transform our children's and adult's services will continue over the next year. We will build on our strong local partnerships and working in a streamlined way with providers to ensure an integrated approach to deliver better outcomes for all those who live in Harrow.

Next year will see exciting plans for our leisure offer across the borough. We will ensure that residents receive the best possible sport and leisure provision through our re-tendering of services at our three leisure sites at Harrow Leisure Centre, Hatch End Swimming Pool, and Bannister Sports Centre and looking at future investment in leisure facilities. This year, we have refurbished 36 tennis courts - next year we will work with the Council's tennis operator to increase participation at these courts in our parks. We are also planning to develop community outreach with our leisure operator, Everyone Active, to better reach people who are currently inactive and not able to access the council's leisure centres.

In fulfilling the ambitions of this corporate plan, there are a number of internal drivers that will enable the council as an organisation to deliver better outcomes for residents. We have developed a workforce development strategy which seeks to ensure all staff have the skills and competencies needed to deliver high quality services for residents. This is supported by better technology and systems, as we embrace new innovative ways of working.

We are preparing a new Customer Experience strategy for 2024-26 which will build on our successful work over the last couple of years in this area and launch in Summer. This will include further work on the website to improve personalisation and optimise mobile phone functionality; improve access through traditional channels such as face-to-face and telephony; make the most of new IT system

replacements and further reduce the need to make contact with the council unnecessarily. There is a golden thread through the council's priorities and the staff objectives that staff look to achieve every year. Over the past year we have embedded performance systems to capture and track our progress on the corporate priorities to ensure we improve services for our residents. This includes performance indicators relating to the Flagship Actions and our Corporate Improvement Programme. The council summarises progress against its plans through our quarterly Strategic Performance Report which is our public report on performance. We will continue to monitor the delivery of our corporate priorities as part of our corporate performance monitoring system.



## Our Priorities for Residents – review and forward look

### 1. A council that puts residents first

With council services that are easily accessible and effective, promises that are delivered upon, clear customer service standards and improved communications we will put residents first and restore pride in Harrow.

Our 2023/24 Flagship Actions were to:

#### **1. *Install full fibre internet to all council homes and include Grange Farm Community Hall and Northolt Road Community Hall by the end of March 2024, helping our council tenants be more connected.***

1,496 out of 6,658 council premises have been connected. Due to external factors beyond the council's control the programme was halted. However, we now anticipate that full fibre to premises across the borough will be complete in 2026.

#### **2. *Launch a new consultation platform called 'My Harrow Talk', keeping the views of residents at the heart of decision making***

MyHarrow Talk, our new consultation platform, launched in Spring 2023 making it easier for residents to have their say on how we make decisions in Harrow. Since its launch, we have had more than 24,000 visitors to the site. 15 consultations have been run on this platform with 10,200 visitors looking at information provided and some 2,873 have contributed responses to the consultations.

#### **3. *Deliver a new planning website by the end of the summer, making it easier for our residents to apply or look up and comment on planning applications.***

Launched in September, a new planning portal is now available, giving residents better access to information on proposed developments and more opportunities to have their say.

#### **4. *Adopt new planning protections to restrict tall buildings in our suburbs and better control conversions from houses into flats to preserve the character of Harrow.***

In July 2023 following a public consultation we adopted Supplementary Planning Documents setting out that Harrow wants to keep its predominantly low-rise suburban character, with more height permitted in the town centre and Wealdstone.

5. ***Create safe and secure cycle parking at Harrow on the Hill station by May 2024, encouraging more active travel and healthier lifestyles.***
6. ***Rollout the first car parking spaces for car clubs in our car parks by May 2024, helping reduce the number of cars and emissions on our roads by giving residents easier access to cars when they need it, at a reasonable rate.***

We are working hard to create safe and secure cycle parking at Harrow on the Hill station and rollout the first car club parking spaces in our car parks. We are making good progress to achieve this and there will be further reporting on this in due course.

7. ***Respond to 90% of complaints in 15 working days, improving our responsiveness and customer experience.***

We have made great strides to achieve our target of responding to 90% of complaints in 15 working days. Within the first 6 months 93% of stage one complaints were handled in 15 working days.

8. ***Improve our website to create a more personalised service through the MyHarrow Account, the ability to track progress of reported items online and enhance the customer experience.***

We have improved our website to enhance the customer experience. Residents now have access to up-to-date information across various services including waste, planning and parking.

## 2. A borough that is clean and safe

We committed to improving the quality of our public spaces by taking action against those who make Harrow feel unsafe and dirty. To improve our public spaces, we also pledge to invest in our parks and open spaces, and encourage active and sustainable travel. By supporting local businesses and high streets through challenging times we pledge to make Harrow a destination for shopping and socialising.

Our Flagship Actions for 2023/24 were to:

- 1. Deliver Phase One of the Grange Farm estate regeneration – Harrow’s largest estate regeneration – by the end of 2023, delivering 89 quality affordable homes. By April 2024 we will determine the planning application for Phase Two.***

Late in the summer of 2023, the first tenants moved into their new homes, a mix of town houses and apartments on Grange Farm estate in South Harrow.

There are new timelines for Phase 2 of the Grange Farm regeneration and we have approved business plans for the Grange Farm estate. We aim to submit the planning application in the Autumn.

- 2. Install at least 15 mobile CCTV cameras in the areas of Harrow most targeted by fly-tippers to reduce the levels of dumping and to make the people who do this pay.***

We have installed 10 CCTV cameras in hotspot areas to act against those caught illegally dumping waste, with another 5 CCTV cameras awaiting installation. More than 1,500 fines for fly-tipping were issued between January and October 2023.

- 3. Ensure good quality open spaces for our residents, through the reaccreditation of our 6 Green Flag parks and identify 3 more parks to become accredited to Green Flag status by 2024/2025.***

Last summer 6 of our parks retained their Green Flag status, meaning that our communities continue to have access to quality green and other open spaces. These spaces are well-managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve.

- 4. Refurbish 36 tennis courts in Harrow parks and open spaces by 2025, delivering good quality courts and a new booking system.***

During the Summer of 2023 we upgraded 36 of our most neglected tennis courts across Harrow. We secured a grant of £445k from the Lawn Tennis Association to bring these courts to a good playing standard and these are now enjoyed by the community.

**5. *Resurface over 60 carriageways and footways over the next 12 months through our improved highway maintenance programme.***

Our £10m resurfacing programme commenced in the summer – first focusing on temporary repairs followed by a programme to resurface 60 roads and footways across the borough.

**6. *Double the number of council provided electric charging points for the public in the next 12 months, helping residents who have or will choose hybrid or electric vehicles in the future, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality.***

We are working hard to double the number of electric charging points across Harrow. We have secured funding for this and are on track to install 225 electric charging points by Spring 2024.

**7. *Identify unauthorised beds in sheds and other environmental issues through a new approach which includes heat maps.***

Our new Enforcement Panel has set out clear plans on how we will tackle rogue landlords, and those building or operating without planning permission. We continue to work with landlords to deliver good quality homes for their tenants.

**8. *Hold at least four Weeks of Action, bringing together council and partners to deal with particular areas of anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping.***

This year we have held 3 Weeks of Action in June, October and January in Edgware, Rayners Lane and Wealdstone.

Working with the police and community partners, our enforcement, community safety and street cleansing teams tackled local issues such as anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, trading offences, and Houses of Multiple Occupations (HMOs). The remaining Week of Action will take place in March this year.

### **3. A place where those in need are supported**

We will celebrate Harrow's diversity and empower communities and residents. We will support those most in need by providing better career opportunities through training and employment and working with our partners and the voluntary sector to help residents live well for longer in the community.

Our Flagship Actions for 2023/24 were to:

#### ***1. Help with the cost-of-living crisis, we will deliver another year of free school meals during school holidays.***

Between April and December, more than 6,500 families have received help with free-school meals during the school holidays thanks to the Government's Household Support Fund. We also used this funding to support those most in need with energy bills and cost of living payments, as well as basic food provisions.

#### ***2. At least doubling the number of Harrow Council Apprenticeships in the borough by the end of the year.***

We have doubled the number of apprenticeships in the council and in the borough by March 2024. We will use National Apprenticeship Week in February 2024 to create more opportunities in the community.

#### ***3. Launch a skills and employment programme for our most vulnerable young people before the summer of 2024, including our care leavers, with applications launching by March 2024.***

This year, we launched a new skills and employment programme to match vulnerable young people and care leavers to apprenticeship opportunities in the council. Applications will launch in Spring this year as one of our new Flagship Actions.

#### ***4. Upgrade the Council's 10 Children Centres into Family Centres, which will deliver more integrated services for residents which includes early years and health.***

Our first new Family Centre known as the 'Family Hub' opened in January 2024 and we are on track to roll out all Family Hubs by September 2024, which will see the council, health and voluntary sector partners working together to deliver more integrated services to families.

**5. *Work with residents, community groups and the voluntary sector to create a new adult social care and mental health service by July.***

A new service was launched in July 2023, with the council now managing both mental health and adult social care services. This allows us to focus on person-centred care pathways so that services are delivered holistically and better link to the community network of services in Harrow.

**6. *Improve our neighbourhood resource centres into true adult social care and well-being hubs.***

Lots of work is taking place to create a stronger offer for our residents through our Neighbourhood Resource Centres (NRCs). This is a two-year programme and is due to complete in 2025/26.

**7. *Development of our new customer centre at Gayton Road for people at risk of homelessness or concerns about vulnerable residents.***

We launched our new Customer Centre at Gayton Road bringing together services to support to our residents with the most urgent housing and social care enquiries.

**8. *Start construction on Milton Road, resulting in 100% high quality, affordable housing, which includes family-sized homes.***

Construction is well-underway on Milton Road. In February the concrete frame for the apartment block was completed and brickwork for the townhouses has now started. We are on track to deliver the 36 high quality, affordable homes in December 2024.

## **Our Flagship Actions for 2024/25: A Council that puts residents first**

Last year we pledged to make council services more easily accessible in the community and make sure the voice of residents is at the heart of everything we do. We will build on this work this year, expanding our work to make Harrow a place that is welcoming and retains its special character. We want to lead by example as an inclusive employer, investing in local talent and developing future leaders. The new Flagship Actions for this year are to:

1. Improve our website to make it easier for you to access information and council services, using mobile technology to deliver a more personal service.
2. Bring services to our communities by launching a new pilot Customer Services access kiosk at one of our libraries.
3. Move forward with our regeneration plans for well-designed family sized homes by submitting the planning application for Byron Quarter phase one.
4. Make housing more affordable in Harrow by delivering more than 50 affordable homes built on council sites.
5. Complete over 200 new kitchens and bathrooms to council owned homes.
6. Consult on our Draft Local Plan which sets out our long-term vision for Harrow. Take residents' views and outcomes from the consultation to produce an updated Local Plan within 2024/25. This will include housing, economic growth, community facilities, infrastructure, the environment, climate change adaptation, and good design.
7. Protect the heritage of Harrow further by formally designating at least two Local Areas of Special Character.
8. For the first time, we will recruit 2 graduates as part of the National Graduate Scheme.
9. Offer a variety of new work experience placements within the council including to 3 Harrow students in higher education.
10. Start the work to enhance Harrow Town Centre, making it a better-connected, more accessible, and sustainable space with new workspaces by March 2025.

## **Our Flagship Actions for 2024/25: A borough that is clean and safe**

In 2023/24 we took action to tackle cleanliness and crime in the borough and make Harrow a destination for shopping and socialising. This year, we are expanding our work on safety and will deliver on key priorities to address the climate emergency, which support our ambitions to make Harrow a healthy and attractive place to live and work. The new Flagship Actions for this year are to:

1. Establish flood alleviation measures in Chandos Recreation Ground to reduce the risk of flooding in the local community and bring it up to the standard required for Green Flag status. In addition, we will prepare another 2 parks or open spaces for Green Flag accreditation by 2026.
2. Create a culture of recycling in the borough. Delivering at least 7 recycling events in our schools and with community partners to support residents, and delivering at least 3 TRAIID events in the borough to reduce waste by recycling and reusing more.
3. Begin to install the Harrow to Pinner cycleway. We will engage with our residents and businesses to create a well-used scheme that works for the local community.
4. Identify 3 locations for new habitat banks and enhance biodiversity in Harrow's parks and open spaces.
5. Deliver year two of the council's electrical testing and safety programme and achieve (100%) compliance on council housing.
6. Make our council homes and public buildings more sustainable and cheaper to run. We will do this by retrofitting 80 council homes to bring them up to an EPC C rating; installing solar panels at 5 schools and council buildings; and installing ground source heat pumps at 2 sheltered housing schemes.
7. For the second year running, install a further 200 EV residential charging points in the borough, with at least 5 of these being ultra-rapid charging points (subject to installation requirements).
8. Reduce anti-social behaviour in 4 hotspot areas by working with the police and other partners at a series of Days and Nights of Action.
9. Launch a new Pothole Squad using new technology to detect and fix more potholes quickly and at a lower cost.



10. Create a task force to take action against people who make our borough dirty and unsafe and implement neighbourhood street-cleaning crews who know their local area and the community.

## **Our Flagship Actions for 2024/25: A place where those in need are supported**

Last year, our priorities centred around supporting those most in need by working in collaboration with our community partners. We will continue this through our strong partnerships; we will help residents with their care needs, ensure greater confidence in using our digital platforms, and create employment opportunities for our most vulnerable young people. The new Flagship Actions for this year are to:

1. Implement the skills and employment offer from the council for our most vulnerable young people to young people with SEN and care leavers, offering a minimum of 5 apprenticeships or work placements within council services in 2024/25.
2. Expand the scope of the Conversation Café to enable residents' easier access to council information and advice on services within the borough.
3. Pilot an offer around digital inclusion for residents which helps them access a range of council services.
4. As we roll out our new model of Family Hubs, further integrate housing and other vital services for families.
5. Launch a health and wellbeing charter for schools and families to take action together against the negative impacts of childhood obesity – 75% of all primary schools to have signed up within the year.
6. Get Harrow Moving through a series of themed walking trails in our parks, with 500 new walkers signed up for the walks in 2024, of which at least 400 take part in more than one walk.
7. Purchase up to 25 further homes to provide temporary accommodation to homeless families in Harrow.
8. Enable greater digital inclusion by supporting 100 learners to gain digital skills (Beginners to Level 3).
9. Deliver 60 extra care units for older people at the former Kodak site.
10. Consolidate and launch the new models and criteria for our Neighbourhood Resource Centres, with Kenmore and Vaughan NRCs going live in April 2024 and the New Bentley Health and Well Being Centre going live late Autumn with an official launch in January 2025.