

HARROW BUSINESS CONSULTATIVE PANEL

18 JULY 2006

Chairman: Councillor Manji Kara

Councillors: * Mrinal Choudhury * Susan Hall (in the Chair)
* Keith Ferry * Yogesh Teli (1)* Denotes Member present
(1) Denotes category of Reserve Member**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**

1. **Appointment of Chairman for the Meeting:**
In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Manji Kara, (previously appointed to that office by the Cabinet - see Minute 2 below), it was
RESOLVED: That Councillor Susan Hall be appointed Chairman for this meeting.
2. **Appointment of Chairman:**
RESOLVED: To note the appointment, at the Cabinet meeting on 8 June 2006, of Councillor Manji Kara as Chairman of the Panel for the Municipal Year 2006/2007.
3. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**
RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Manji Kara	Councillor Yogesh Teli
4. **Declarations of Interest:**
RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.
5. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**
RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Mrinal Choudhury as Vice-Chairman of the Panel for the Municipal Year 2006/2007.
6. **Arrangement of Agenda:**
RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.
7. **Minutes:**
RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2006, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.
8. **Matters Arising from the Minutes:**
An officer advised that there was an error contained under this item in the circulated papers. It was pointed out that, under item 18, 'the total incomes from parking fines...' should read 'the total income from fees and charges...'
RESOLVED: That the above be noted.
9. **Public Questions:**
RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).
10. **Petitions:**
RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

11. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

12. **Terms of Reference:**

RESOLVED: That the terms of reference for the Panel be noted.

13. **Harrow Business Against Crime:**

The Panel received a presentation from the Crime Reduction Manager, setting out progress on the Harrow Business Against Crime (HBAC) initiative. The Panel heard that key parts of the scheme comprised:

- A radio link with CCTV support;
- subscription to the National Business Information System (NBIS), a database that would allow sharing of sensitive offender information in real-time;
- the employment of a full-time Business Crime Intelligence Manager (BIM) responsible for collecting and disseminating information to members of the scheme;

It was explained that HBAC currently focused on the town centre area, but it was hoped that the scheme would eventually be implemented Borough-wide. It was added that there were opportunities to share information cross-borough to support the Initiative.

Upon being opened for discussion, the Panel heard that a number of other boroughs, including Hillingdon, were implementing similar schemes.

The Panel requested an update on this subject to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

14. **Business Continuity Management:**

The Panel received a presentation of the Business Continuity Officer, which explained the principles of Business Continuity Management (BCM) as well as the Council's current position in this regard.

During the course of the presentation, the following points were raised:

- That BCM was a process designed to ensure the operation of services in a time of a disruption, such as in the case of severe weather or system failure;
- that the same formula for BCM was being used across West London;
- that Harrow was currently at 'Stage 1' of the Business Continuity Institute's recommended process, that of collating information across service areas;
- further to this, that a Business Impact Assessment (BIA) was being conducted across the Council, after which Business Continuity Options would be identified.

The Panel was informed that Harrow currently backed up all data to a separate site, which could be accessed within 24 hours.

A business representative suggested that the Council might actively assist local businesses with BCM. An officer stated that efforts were being made to engage with community business federations to this end, and that the concerns of the representative would be noted.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

15. **Economic Regeneration:**

An officer gave a presentation to the Panel on economic regeneration. He explained that economic regeneration focused on increasing employment, encouraging business growth and investment, and addressing economic disadvantage. The presentation addressed the following areas:

Harrow Economic Regeneration and Development Review

The Harrow Economic Development and Regeneration Review had been instigated, the Panel heard, to analyse local patterns of economic change and disadvantage, as well as to identify areas where action might be needed. It was reported that the Review was currently at the data-gathering stage, and that a business needs survey of over 1,000 businesses had been conducted, amongst other research activities.

Harrow's classification as a 'commuter borough' was emphasised, along with the corresponding need to ensure that the local economy was a strong one, with steps taken to maximize local employment.

Harrow Business Mapping

It was explained that a Business Mapping exercise had been conducted, in order to establish key issues facing local businesses. These were reported as:

- difficulty finding new clients
- lack of marketing expertise in the workforce
- insecure financial position

It was added that approximately 7% of small businesses contacted had considered moving out of the Borough, which was higher than the national average. Of these however, 5.5% expressed a desire to remain in Harrow.

Business Incubator Development

The presentation also set out progress on a business incubation scheme for Harrow. Of those surveyed, 10% of small businesses had expressed interest in business incubation. It was remarked that there was shortage of business incubation schemes across West London as well as Harrow.

It was added that the incubator would initially be set up virtually, before being allocated a permanent site in the Borough.

In the course of discussion, the following points were raised:

- the need to promote Harrow as a tourist centre;
- the need to ensure Harrow benefits from the 2012 Olympics;
- the importance of securing adequate employment in the service-sector;
- the need to promote the Council's ability to empower local businesses;

The Chairman requested that figures on bankruptcy in the Borough be brought to the Panel's next meeting, in order to gain a fuller picture of the economic health of the Borough.

The low attendance of business community representatives at the meeting was also noted, to which the Chairman suggested an informal meeting between Members and officers to discuss ways to increase their participation.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 9.34 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SUSAN HALL
Chairman for the Meeting