

APPENDIX C

OPTIONS FOR BUDGET CONSULTATION

	2004-2005	Band D	% Change
Increased funding for schools	£800,000	£10.20	1.02%

The Schools in Harrow have identified ongoing funding pressures arising from a number of issues, such as enhanced terms and conditions for teachers required nationally and the difficulties in recruiting and retaining teaching staff locally. Within the base budget figures the Council is proposing to pass on all the increase in schools funding to school budgets that the government requires. However, the local schools have identified that this increase will not meet the costs of all the pressures they will face on their budgets next year.

An increase of £800,000 would considerably help the schools to ease the pressure.

Fees and Charges

<i>Fairer home care charges</i>	<i>-£358,000</i>	<i>-£4.32</i>	<i>-0.43%</i>
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The Council currently charges people in receipt of Home Care who have savings of over £19,500 and higher than a minimum level of income. The charge is £9 per hour up to a maximum of £81 per week. The cost to the Council of providing the service is over £11 per hour, which means that all people in receipt of home care are receiving a subsidised service.

The Council currently has the lowest hourly charge and maximum charge of any of its neighbours. Average hourly charges for neighbouring councils are over £11 per hour, and the average maximum cost around £300 per week.

The Council has recently retendered many of its home care contracts and expects a significant price increase. This will mean that the lowest cost of providing home care will be over £12 per hour in 2004-05 (the average cost will be significantly higher than this).

The option proposes that the charge be increased to £11 per hour (still lower than the average of neighbouring councils) for those people with a minimum of £30,000 in savings. The maximum charge would be no more than £300 a week. This would mean that everyone in receipt of the service was still receiving a subsidy from the Council, but would go some way to covering the Council's cost of these services. The charge may need to be phased in to help protect those people who would see large increases in charges.

The budget for expenditure on this service in 2003-04 is £4.330m and that for income is £1.289m.

Meals on wheels **-£34,000** **-£0.41** **-0.04%**

The Council currently provides both a frozen and hot meals service to people in the community. The cost of providing hot meals is significantly higher than that of providing frozen meals. The current charge per meal is £2.30, whether that is a hot meal or a frozen one. This charge does not recover the full cost of either service.

The option is to increase the meals charges to £2.50 for frozen meals and £2.60 for hot meals in 2004-05, with a further price increase for hot meals to £3.00 in 2005-06. The differential pricing would reflect the extra costs of providing hot meals, and provide more recovery of costs without making a profit from any service user.

These proposed charges would be similar to the average across neighbouring councils.

The budget for income for 2003-04 is £420k. The budget for expenditure is £960k.

Improving services at a fair price

New pest control charges **-£77,000** **£0.93** **-0.09%**

At present the council does not charge for pest control treatments. It currently only provides a service for rodent control, as it does not have the resources to provide an insect control service (e.g. for wasps, ants, cockroaches etc). The current costs of the service are £77,000 per annum.

The option is to reintroduce an insect control service and levy charges for these of £30 for one treatment, £40 for two treatments to enable the Council to provide this service to citizens of the Borough. This would make the insect control element self financing. In addition, it is proposed to introduce a charge of £30 per treatment (of up to 3 visits) for rodent control which would make the whole service self financing and save the Council the £77,000 costs of currently running the service.

Neighbouring Councils all levy some form of charge for pest control, although levels of charge vary significantly. Harrow is one of a handful of councils left in the country that does not charge for pest control treatments.

Savings to Target Services based on greatest need.

Taxicards **-£125,000** **-£1.50** **-0.15%**

The Council currently funds the costs of taxi journeys (up to £9.90 per trip) for people with a registered disability up to 108 trips per year. While this is a scheme operated across London, it is discretionary and all Councils operate different systems and processes to run the scheme and decide eligibility. Harrow currently spends around £800,000 per year on this scheme, which is partly subsidised by the Greater London Authority, reducing the real cost to the Council to £640,000.

This is the most generous scheme in terms of expenditure anywhere in London. The average cost across the other London Boroughs is less than £200,000 per year. The option is to change policies in relation to taxicards which would reduce the Council's spend to around £525,000 per year on this service. This would still be significantly more than the average spend on this service across London and would ensure that those people with the greatest need will not be affected by these changes.

Rephase Clean and green project ***-£300,000*** ***-£3.62*** ***-0.36%***

This option provides for the rephrasing the roll out of the Clean & Green area based service. At present, 2 of the areas have started and the Kentons will start on the 5th January 2004. The MTBS provides for 3 more areas to start in the 2004-05 financial year, with the final 3 starting in the 2005-06 financial year.

The options for changing the roll out is shown in the table below:

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Current Plan	3 areas	3 areas	3 areas	
Option	3 areas	2 areas	3 areas	1 area

Other potential improvements

Improve standards for private tenants ***£60,000*** ***£0.72*** ***0.07%***

The Best Value Review of Housing and national indicators shows that the standard of Private Sector Housing in Harrow is relatively poor when compared to other London Boroughs. This means that private sector tenants often have to inhabit poor quality, overcrowded homes. The Growth would allow for 3 extra enforcement officers to be appointed over the next 2 years to work towards improving the quality of private sector housing across the Borough for tenants.

Improve disability services ***£128,000*** ***£1.54*** ***0.15%***

The Council has identified a need to improve services to people with Physical Disabilities, Sensory Impairment and Learning Disabilities. The funds would enable additional social care staff to be appointed to work with adults with disabilities to help improve services to these vulnerable people.

Improve residential streets ***£570,000*** ***£6.87*** ***0.69%***

The current street maintenance budget only enables urgent maintenance work to be undertaken, meaning that the general condition of residential streets is starting to deteriorate. The growth bids for the next 2 years would reverse this deterioration and enable the Council to make improvements to residential streets.