
REPORT OF CABINET

MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2009

Chairman: * Councillor David Ashton

Councillors: * Marilyn Ashton * Barry Macleod-Cullinane
* Miss Christine Bednell * Chris Mote
* Tony Ferrari * Paul Osborn
* Susan Hall * Mrs Anjana Patel

* Denotes Member present

[Note: Councillor Paul Scott and Councillor Bill Stephenson also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 587 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION I - Key Decision - Sustainable Community Strategy

Cabinet received a report, which set out the results of consultation on the draft revised Sustainable Community Strategy. A reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been circulated on the second supplemental agenda.

The Chairman advised that an amended version of the plan had been tabled. These changes had been made as a result of comments received from the Council's Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead.

Cabinet, having considered the responses to the consultation and agreed that the Strategy be amended as tabled,

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Council)

That the Sustainable Community Strategy be adopted.

Reason for Recommendation: To comply with the legal obligation to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy.

PART II - MINUTES583. **Declarations of Interest:**

The Chairman indicated that, in relation to agenda item 17, Grant Funding 2009/10, he did not anticipate detailed discussion on individual grant applications. Unless specific applications were discussed, he advised that Members did not need to declare interests in individual organisations.

RESOLVED: To note that no interests were declared in relation to the business to be transacted at the meeting.

584. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

585. **Petitions:**

The Chairman presented a petition containing approximately 1,000 signatures from Harrow Central Mosque and Islamic Centre. He read the terms of the petition to the meeting, which were as follows:-

“We the undersigned object to Harrow Council’s proposal to restrict hearse access for funeral prayers at Harrow Central Mosque on Station Road.

We further request Harrow Council to grant the Mosque permission to construct a vehicle crossing to the forecourt of the Mosque based on the following:

The coffin must be brought to the front of the prayer room for funeral prayers and therefore it is necessary to bring the hearse as close to the Mosque as possible to avoid carrying the coffin long distances and crossing roads in public view which could be unsettling to the public and upsetting for the family of the deceased.

The rear access route to the mosque is not adequate to accommodate a hearse. Front access however, is appropriate. The Mosque has two properties that are combined as one large building and hence the forecourt space in front is twice the size of other properties in the area allowing the hearse to park parallel to the road and fully within private land. If necessary, the permission may be granted for a limited time period of one year as after that the funeral prayers would have moved into the new building which has better access arrangements.”

RESOLVED: That the petition be received and referred to the appropriate officers and Portfolio Holder for consideration.

586. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following public questions had been received:

1.

Questioner: Brian Stoker

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: “Whilst we were pleased to read in the local newspaper two weeks ago (quoting Harrow Council’s director Paul Clark), and we also see on Watford FC website, that the council has received a £4.2M grant from central government to build another young people’s sports facility on the Cedars Estate, I am most surprised that there is no information about this on the Council’s website, and that even my ward councillors have no knowledge of this.

I presume this facility will be somewhere on Cedars Open Space, which my house overlooks, but you have not informed me (or my councillors) about it, although the press and spectators at Watford FC were informed.

Therefore can you please tell me what this facility comprises including its size and details of its exact location?”

Answer: I will answer it in two aspects if I may, Mr Stoker.

Firstly this is very positive news, excellent news for Harrow. Despite a very competitive bidding process, Watford Football Club, who were the lead agents on this, or more precisely, Watford Communities Trust, and Harrow Council have been successful in winning this grant of £4.2m. But it is only the start of the story and proper consultation with all local residents will take place from this point. There has to be a substantial amount of planning, both a formal planning application and also setting out the project plan, before the money can actually be confirmed.

The Cedars Youth Centre is in need of major repair and is no longer fit for purpose, and it is a building with only limited accessibility for the local community and which has no suitable meeting space for residents to use. So we are hoping that the money will be effectively used to provide a proper and effective youth centre.

You say that there was no consultation and we touched on this in discussion before the meeting, but I understand that there were in fact two events last year. One was on Sunday 3 August, in which I am told 100 people took part in consultation on possible design and usage, and we also ran an evening where around 30 young people completed designs and sketchwork on the concept and layout. There was another evening at Cedars on 2 September last year, and I am told 3,000 letters were posted by hand to every household within a mile radius. Obviously you did not get one and I do not know why that was the case. That was a discussion really and the initial thinking of local residents who were able to come along as to the concept, but frankly we now get on to the nitty gritty of what we would actually do with the money. I can assure you, and I undertake, that there will be a proper and full consultation to ensure that we are all happy with what is going to be done.

Supplemental Question: Thank you, that is very good of you to say, but yes I heard recently this statement from Paul Clark that 3,000 letters had been posted. I live 100 yards from Cedars Open Space and I did not get any letter or letters. The Director's statement in the press some 3 weeks' ago was quote "over the next few weeks we will be working with local people and others to ensure that we put the right planning application forward". So how is this to be implemented if there is still no communication with people that live locally? This situation is most unsatisfactory. It bears the hallmark of the Council's Cedars Hall planning fiasco of 18 months' ago.

So how are we going to get the consultation if we have not had it? We have had 3 meetings, we received nothing. This happened with planning applications previously: no consultations until we kick up a fuss and here we are again with the same situation. How are you going to assure us we are going to be told?

Supplemental Answer: I am sorry you did not get the previous letters which I understand were sent out. Having said that, this is, as I said, simply the start of the process. I am told that on April 3rd, through Watford Football Club, there will be a project manager starting on this, and his or her first task will be to start a proper consultation process. If I may say so, specifically including yourself.

2.

Questioner: Brian Stoker

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: "We understand from the Watford Football Club web page that a £4.2M government grant has been given to it in partnership with Harrow Council for a young people's sports facility on Cedars Estate. This will include ' .. a third generation multi-use outdoor pitch.....a development....protected from any potential vandalism'.

If this is to be built, as I suspect, on Cedars Open Space (there is no other space for a one acre pitch on Cedars Estate), can you please tell me how the public will continue to have full access to the Open Space despite the vandalism protection (fence?) proposed for this development?"

Answer: As you rightly say, the answer relates to the previous discussion. This is the initial concept behind what is being anticipated and there will be a discussion as to how we can achieve that. The £4.2m has to be used in a certain way but it is not so constricted that we are straight jacketing a particular route, and we will discuss and debate this with local residents, including yourself, to get it right.

Supplemental Question: When would it be on the Cabinet plan for a key decision on the use of the land?

Supplemental Answer: That I cannot answer, simply because we will have the consultation first. But speaking to officers earlier in the day, we will take months to do this, it is not an immediate thing.

3.

Questioner: Marie-Louise Nolan, Vice-Chair, Harrow Mencap

Asked of: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing

Question: "What were the reasons for the Council still only receiving a two star rating from the Audit Commission and therefore remaining one of the worst performing Councils in London?"

Answer:
(Cllr Ashton) I intend to answer this question as Leader, because it is a generic question about the overall star rating. I would just briefly note in passing that you are asking this on behalf of Harrow Mencap, and I appreciate and know that Harrow Mencap is a completely non-political organisation.

There are two main reasons why our overall rating did not go up, in spite of the fact that two years' ago we were one mark away, in other words, in March 2006, we were one mark away from being a one star council and now, in this current assessment, we are just two marks away from being a three star council. You have asked two questions, firstly, why did we not go up from two stars to three stars and the answer is simple really.

Firstly, we are still limited by the Corporate Assessment score which was done back in 2006, and over the three year period 2005-2008 you are not allowed to have a separate Corporate Assessment and that Corporate Assessment holds us back. That was the time when we did not have a Chief Executive. Now we do and I have every confidence that, if we had a Corporate Assessment now, it would be a very different answer.

The second point is that Adult Services, for the previous six years under the previous administration, had languished at one star with poor prospects. For the first time ever, with the attitude and the approach this administration is taking, it is now one star with promising prospects, and again, we were just a tick away from getting two stars but we could not quite make it. We did in fact look at ways, but we decided not to, of investing our money to get that higher star rating, but we decided that if we did that it would be artificial and whilst it might push us up star rating wise, it would not be the right thing to do for residents. I had that explicit discussion with officers and we decided not to do that. So the attitude of this Council is that it puts its money into the Adults Transformation Programme for this second reason and the improvements are really now starting to show through and they will show through, and to use a classic term, in CPA parlance, they will be embedded.

Supplemental Question: Thank you. I have got my supplementary and obviously, as my original question was for the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing, it is relating really to learning disability.

Following the CSCI's inspectors' poor rating of learning disability services, which was over twelve months' ago, Harrow Mencap was told that significant improvements were already in place. However, given the latest inspection, they still clearly are not. So when and how will people with learning disabilities in Harrow actually see these promises becoming a reality?

Supplemental Answer: That relates back to my previous answer, and the fact that we have an Adults Transformation Programme, which is focusing on adults with learning disabilities, because we understand that that service has to improve. We are quite alert to that fact. The review that took place, took place at a time when there was a change in management and (a) I am confident, (b) I expect and (c) I commit that over the next six months' maximum, you will see not just the start of an improvement but you will see the continuation of the existing improvement. I will, by the way, ask Councillor Macleod-Cullinane to give you a small presentation because you are obviously interested in the way the Council is improving. There is a small document called "The story of Harrow's achievements" and also our direction of travel statement from the CPA, which I think, neatly encapsulates the very positive direction the Council is taking. I am sure you will find that very interesting reading.

[Notes: (i) Cabinet agreed that Executive Procedure Rule 16.4 be suspended to enable Mr Stoker to put Ms Pickersgill's question to the Leader of the Council as she had been unable to attend the meeting;

(ii) In accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 16.4, each questioner asked a supplementary question which was additionally answered;

(iii) In accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 16.3, the Leader of the Council answered question 3 on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing].

587. **Councillor Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note the following Councillor Questions had been received:

1.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Scott

Asked of: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing

Question: "What work has been done with the Citizens' Advice Bureau to ensure its delivery of non-housing advice is not compromised by the loss of the Housing Advice Centre?"

Answer: We have been in regular dialogue with the Citizens' Advice Bureau, its staff and the committee of it, and have discussed with them their requirements for ensuring that the day to day business of the CAB is not affected by the expiry of the Housing Advice Contract on 31 March 2009. The contract has a natural life end and that is coming up now.

We are currently working with CAB, and we are looking at how to increase the opportunities for housing support and advice to be offered to Harrow's residents. No final decision has yet been taken on the overall shape of housing advice services. In fact, there are about four different centres where people get housing advice from within the Council. One of our concerns is that there is not only a duplication of that advice giving, but there is also the potential for conflict and confusion in that advice. What we want to do is make sure that we reduce those points of potential confusion, and make sure that we provide a better source of housing advice for our residents.

The CAB has indicated to us in our ongoing discussions that they require some additional grant from the housing service to ensure that their staff structure and continued occupation of Civic 8 is not disrupted in this coming financial year. They have also said it would be helpful to receive an extension of the housing advice contract through until 30 June this year to let us take forward those ongoing transition arrangements and we have agreed to both of those. Further, they have said a number of their staff, in the general CAB services, would need some additional training to provide that sort of general housing advice that is necessary. We have offered to provide this, and that training will take place in the run up to the end of that extension period on 30 June 2009 in conjunction with national CAB oversight.

We are very appreciative of the CAB's service that is provided under the original contract awarded back in 1989, and we look forward to developing their expertise and the expertise that their transferring staff will bring with them to the delivery of an integrated housing advice and options service, in the main housing service within the Council.

These changes are being driven by our desire to increase the range of housing services offered to Harrow residents facing housing issues and problems in these difficult times, and to make sure that we get the best advice to them in the most appropriate way without the potential for confusion and for conflicting advice being given.

Supplemental Question:

I am grateful for that answer and for the level of detail that accompanied it. Would you agree with me that while it is obviously sound and sensible that we want to avoid duplication of work for the purposes of cost, and duplication of work for the purposes of ensuring that there is no confusion by different advice being given to the same residents from different sources, it is an important principle to maintain that we should have available to Harrow residents an independent source of advice for housing, when some of them, in their view rightly and possibly in the Council view wrongly, have difficulty or suspicions in getting all of their advice from the housing department, when it has vested financial interests in the advice that it gives?

Supplemental Answer:

In terms of what is driving this, it is not being driven by issues of cost. What is driving this is the need to make sure that we provide the best service for our residents who are facing housing issues at this time. This is not an issue of cost and I think we need to dispel that first.

Secondly, in terms of saying that there is independence here, the general housing advice service at the moment is being paid for and funded by the Council, through the contract with the CAB. We will make sure that there is not the sense of the loss of independence that you suggest that there would be. In terms of the more generalised independent element that the CAB brings to it, the reason why we are investing in additional training and the general CAB element is so that that need to reassess and check things can be maintained within Harrow Citizens' Advice Bureau, and we will be working with the Citizens' Advice Bureau to make sure that we and they together can offer the very best service for our residents. I should add that it also brings us in line with what happens across the rest of London. In the vast majority of boroughs, this is the sort of structure of services, so we can concentrate those scarce resources into making sure that we deliver the very best service without the confusion that there is the potential for.

2.

Questioner: Councillor Paul Scott

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: "How many, if any, Paupers' funerals were there in Harrow last year and what was their total cost?"

Answer: The answer is there were none, and therefore the cost was zero.

Supplemental Question: Would you endeavour to either give a guarantee, if you so wish, or at least investigate that we have not only the contingency funds available, which I imagine would be rather small, but we also have the protocols in place so that, should we be required to undertake any of these paupers' funerals under statutory responsibility, we are able to meet them, as it seems possible that given the current economic climate we may be called upon to do so?

Supplemental Answer: I understand. We looked into this a little bit. There are apparently no real criteria for paupers' funerals. It is, as you might gather, something of an antiquated term. What happens is, I understand, those without resources or presumably those looking after the individual who died would approach the local health authority, or social services, who would pay for a contract funeral and the cemetery fees are paid by whoever does the contract. So in the unfortunate circumstance, I am sure that we would rise to the occasion.

3.

Questioner: Councillor Bill Stephenson

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: "In 2000 many residents, including myself, submitted objects to the Council to be part of the Millennium Archive. Many of these were included in a travelling display round the Borough. Can Councillor Ashton tell me what has happened to those objects, are they stored anywhere and will they ever be displayed again?"

Answer: The frank answer is I am not sure, Councillor Stephenson.

What I am told is, and this obviously dates back, as you rightly say, an awfully long time and with all due respect, this was under your watch, some of the items that formed the Millennium Archive are held in the Local History Library at the Civic Centre and they include photographs, booklets, posters and other documentary material. We are aware that there were other items in the display but these are not in the possession of the Council any longer.

Supplemental Question: Councillor Jean Lammiman was actually responsible for looking after the Millennium project and I think it is very disappointing that people put in precious artefacts and submitted them, and then we cannot say whether they are going to be returned, and they cannot seem to be found. I would just ask again that real efforts are made to find out what on earth has happened. What has gone wrong with the system that we lose a whole archive?

Supplemental Answer: I do not disagree with you, it is just an awfully long time after the event to be raising it.

I did, in fact, try to speak to Councillor Lammiman but she is away at the moment. I will try to speak to her, although I would be surprised if after all this time she can suddenly recollect where these things are, but I will ask her.

4.

Questioner: Councillor Bill Stephenson

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: "The Council owns or looks after a number of works of art including pictures, statues, collections etc. Excluding those works of art and collections cared for by the Harrow Museum, can I ask if these works of art are catalogued and, if so, are they valued for insurance purposes and covered by the Council's insurance policies?"

Answer: What I am told is that there is no formal list or catalogue of all the works of art owned by the Council but of course, as you say, this separates the items in the Museum and also the Guildhall items, which is valuable material, and which is separately catalogued and separately insured. But the individual items dotted around the building, apparently, are not individually catalogued. So what I did this afternoon was to have a chat with the Acting Director of Libraries and Culture and he, on my behalf, took digital photographs of all the things he could find, and we will then keep that as an archive and if necessary, get insurance for the more valuable items.

5.

Questioner: Councillor Bill Stephenson

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: "The Council has set up a Revenue and Income Optimisation Initiative (RIO) which was devised by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC). Can you tell me

- (i) how much they were paid for doing this work,
- (ii) what the proposed savings from this initiative were supposed to be and how much of these savings have actually been achieved?"

Answer: The total paid to Price Waterhouse Coopers for the project is £77,000 (covering three phases of work) and this is a one-off cost. The savings so far, which are ongoing, are £119,000 a year from 2008-09, plus parts of the parking income factored into the following year's budget. There is more work occurring on income generation as part of the ongoing programme, so the figures are not yet finalised.

When we first started this exercise, the target we had was £400,000 and one of the reasons for that was that we used some overall data which suggested that particularly the income that Harrow was getting compared to other boroughs was much lower. If you looked at the extension of that, it seemed as if there were some obvious savings to be made, or additional income to be generated.

Two things happened after that. Firstly, when we really got down to it with PWC, we found there were quite big differences between Harrow and other boroughs. For example, other boroughs have large car parks, we do not. So there was quite a lot of car park income which we will never have because we have not got the car parks.

Secondly, when you look at some of the savings which might arise, we came to a view that they would be adverse in terms of their impact on residents and therefore did not proceed with them.

And thirdly, we have been overtaken to a certain extent by the economic situation and some of the savings envisaged just are not feasible at the moment. Maybe they will be in the future.

Supplemental Question: Would you agree that as you have made £117,000, you paid Price Waterhouse Coopers £77,000 and it was supposed to raise £400,000, it is not a very good project, as you have only raised £40,000.

Supplemental Answer: No, I do not agree. I think it is perfectly worthwhile and it is not finished yet.

6.

Questioner: Councillor Bill Stephenson

Asked of: Councillor David Ashton, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnership and Finance

Question: "Would you agree that the wheeled bins supplied by the Council to local residents are the property of the Council, and should any resident damage a bin deliberately then they would be liable for the cost of a replacement bin?"

Answer: I think that if a bin is rendered completely unusable in a detrimental way by a resident who does it to make it unusable, then I expect the resident to assist the Council in putting it right.

Supplemental Question: Is Councillor Ashton aware that one of the members of his group has publicly appeared in the newspapers and said that he has deliberately damaged one of the wheeled bins and has encouraged other residents to do the same, and if he is not so aware and now he is aware, what action will he take against that member of his group?

Supplemental Answer: These questions are not designed to focus on individual councillors and I will be speaking individually, if that were to occur, with any particular councillor. But as far as I know, no damage has been done which has rendered any bin unusable.

[Note: In accordance with Executive Procedure Rule 17.4, with the exception of question 4, each Councillor asked a supplementary question which was additionally answered].

588. **Forward Plan 1 March - 30 June 2009:**

RESOLVED: To note the contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 March – 30 June 2009.

589. **United Kingdom Youth Parliament Winners:**

Cabinet welcomed Aakash Bharania and Rhiya Pau (Members of Youth Parliament) and Amar Chandarana (Deputy Member of Youth Parliament) to the meeting. Cabinet congratulated the young people on their success at the recent elections.

The young people outlined their aims which included tackling the negative press and stereotyping of young people in the media, reducing crime and the establishment of a youth Ofsted. They thanked Cabinet for the invitation to the meeting and for their support.

590. **Annual Audit and Inspection Letter:**

Cabinet received a report which related to the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and welcomed Annette Furley, the Council's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Lead, and Matthew Hall and Paul Schofield of Deloitte, to the meeting.

Annette Furley presented the Annual Audit and Inspection letter and outlined the key messages. She advised that there was strong governance and leadership and that the Council was well positioned for improvement. The Council had improved well during the year and the rate of improvement in performance indicators had accelerated. In particular, there had been improvement in relation to recycling, culture and housing and adult social care was showing promising prospects. She would, however, like to see improvements in resident satisfaction.

A representative of Deloitte advised that they had given an unqualified opinion on the accounts and this had been reported to the Council's Governance Audit and Risk Management Committee. He advised that there were adequate Value for Money arrangements in place. The Council's Use of Resources scorecard had moved from a score of 2 to 3 out of 4.

In response to questions from Members, Cabinet was advised that:-

- the new CAA recognised some of the burden of external inspections and was more about having a continuous dialogue. It was also a joint inspectorate regime;

- in terms of the impact of the current economic climate on other councils inspected, there had been no detailed analysis of this, although anecdotally other London authorities were in a similar position to Harrow.

The Chief Executive advised that this year's letter was much more positive in tone and highlighted the accelerated improvements. In particular, he mentioned the improvement in the Council's finances in the current economic climate. He added that if the letter was considered alongside the Price Waterhouse Coopers report, there was no area of the Council that had gone backwards in terms of performance. Improved scores meant improved services for residents.

Cabinet and officers thanked both Annette Furley and the representatives from Deloitte for their assistance and constructive comments.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter be noted.

Reason for Decision: To publish the Annual Audit and inspection Letter and ensure that the Council was responding to the issues raised in the letter.

591. **Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector:**

Following an initial report to Cabinet in December 2008, the Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services introduced a report which set out a more detailed response to the final report and recommendations of the scrutiny review entitled "Delivering a Strengthened Voluntary and Community Sector for Harrow".

The Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services advised that the voluntary sector had been kept up to date in relation to the work being carried out on the scrutiny review recommendations. A cross directorate group had been established to consider the recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he had met with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the adviser to the Grants Advisory Panel and the Chief Executive of Harrow Association of Voluntary Service to discuss the review recommendations and possible ways forward. He added that there had also been an informal discussion with the Director of Commissioning.

The Portfolio Holder concluded that of the 22 review recommendations, it was proposed that 17 be agreed for implementation now, a further 4 be developed within the Third Sector strategy and that one recommendation, relating to Harrow Heroes, not be agreed.

RESOLVED: That the proposed responses to the 22 recommendations be agreed.

Reason for Decision: To respond to the scrutiny report and recommendations.

592. **Scrutiny Review: Right to Manage Challenge Panel:**

Cabinet received a report, which set out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Challenge Panel on the Right to Manage in Harrow for the purposes of information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: The report had been submitted to Cabinet for information only.

593. **Progress on Scrutiny Projects:**

RESOLVED: To receive and note the current progress of the scrutiny reports.

594. **Strategic Performance Report - Quarter 3:**

The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services introduced a report, which summarised Council and service performance against key measures and drew attention to areas requiring action. He advised that the Council had received its best Value for Money score to date and had also moved to 'improving well' in terms of its Direction of Travel. Sickness absence had continued to improve and an A to Z of services had been produced for residents. Whilst there were no poor indicators, there were challenges around the current economic climate.

The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing reported that after the Council had set its rents the government had advised that the rent increase should be reduced to 3.1%. This reduction meant that further consultation was required and bills re-issued. It was hoped that revised bills would be circulated in July/August 2009.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services reported that the Silverdale Centre was now open. This provided a domestic setting for contact between Children Looked After and their parents.

The Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development drew attention to a key challenge in her flagship actions which related to underachievement in specific groups of pupils. This was being addressed by the narrowing the gap project.

The Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services reported that Harrow's library service was now officially rated as the best used library service in the country. He conveyed his thanks to the staff concerned.

RESOLVED: That (1) Portfolio Holders continue to work with officers to achieve improvement against identified key challenges;

(2) the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To enable Cabinet to be informed of performance against key measures and to identify and assign corrective action where necessary.

595. **Key Decision - Sustainable Community Strategy:**
(See Recommendation I).

596. **Key Decision - Communications Plan 2009/10:**
The Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services introduced a report, which identified the need to extend the current one year communications contract to continue the improvement of the service.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Communications Plan be approved, subject to a contract with Westminster City Council being agreed;

(2) authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive to enter into a contract.

Reason for Decision: To ensure the Council continued to inform residents about its services and activities which would contribute to increasing their overall satisfaction and improving the Council's reputation with key stakeholders.

597. **Changes in Cabinet Panel Memberships:**

RESOLVED: That the following changes be made to Cabinet Panel memberships:

1. Councillor Ashok Kulkarni replace Councillor Mrs Kinnear as Member of the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel;
2. Councillor Paul Osborn replace Councillor Ashok Kulkarni as Reserve Member on the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel;
3. Councillor Mrs Myra Michael replace Councillor Mrs Kinnear as Reserve Member on the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum.

Reason for Decision: To enable the changes in memberships to be implemented.

598. **Key Decision - Council Insurance Renewal 1 April 2009:**
The Corporate Director of Finance introduced a report, which set out progress with the procurement of the Council's insurance requirements from 1 April 2009. She drew attention to the Part II report relating to this item which had been circulated on the second supplemental agenda.

RESOLVED: That the action taken to date to renew the Council's insurance cover for 2009/10 be noted and officers be authorised to enter into the recommended insurance contracts.

Reason for Decision: To obtain authority for officers to finalise the Council's insurance arrangements for 2009/10.

(See also Minute 603).

599. **Key Decision - To Agree a New Model for Delivery of the Community Equipment Service:**

The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing introduced a report, which set out the options for transforming the community equipment service, recommended the preferred option for implementation and presented the key implications of implementing the preferred option.

The Corporate Director of Adults and Housing reported that a letter had been received from Mediequip, a company the Council had considered outsourcing to, who had expressed concern that they had been referred to negatively. He reassured Members that there was nothing in that letter that cut across the decision Cabinet were being asked to make and that he had confidence in the information stated in the report. The Portfolio Holder for Adults and Housing endorsed this.

RESOLVED: That the implementation of Option C be agreed – Retail Model for Simple Equipment; Loan Equipment Home Delivery Service for Complex Equipment.

Reasons for Decision: The recommended solution:

- aligned with changing government and local policy around personalisation, choice, promoting independence and enabling self-help by putting users at the heart of the service;
- would meet growing demand resulting from changing demographics;
- created a local market that catered to self-funders;
- stimulated the local economy during the economic downturn.
- enabled efficiency savings to be released.

600. **Key Decision - Determination of Admission Arrangements - Academic Year 2010/11:**

The Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development introduced a report, which explained that Harrow was required to consult before determining admission arrangements for community schools. Consultation had taken place between 8 December 2008 and 13 February 2009. Members of the Harrow Admissions Forum (HAF) at their meeting on 23 February 2009 had made recommendations for the Cabinet's consideration and their recommendations were set out at Appendix 8 to the report.

RESOLVED: That (1) recommendations made by Harrow Admissions Forum and the admission arrangements for Harrow community schools, be agreed as follows:

1. The definition of terms for community school admission rules as set out in Appendix 1 – Part A of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services.
2. The admission arrangements for Harrow nursery schools as set out in Appendix 1 - Part B of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services.
3. The admission arrangements for Harrow primary sector schools as set out in Appendix 1 – Part C of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services, with the caveat that further consultation take place with Elmgrove First and Middle Schools and Roxeth First and Middle School about proposals to increase the planned admissions number.
4. The admission arrangements for Harrow community co-educational high schools for the academic year 2010-11 as set out in Appendix 1 – Part D of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services, with the following oversubscription criteria:

1 st priority	Children Looked After
2 nd priority	Agreed medical claims for student/parent(s)
3 rd priority	Siblings attending the school at the same time (excluding students at the sixth form)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 4 th priority | For 2010 only, families with children in Year 6 (11+ transfer) and Year 7(12+ transfer) who indicated they wanted their children to attend the same school, the following would apply: Where one child was offered a place because they best met the admission rules at a preferred school, the other child would be given the sibling priority for that school. |
| 5 th priority | Distance from home to school measured in a straight line. |
5. The admission arrangements for Bentley Wood High School for Girls as set out in Appendix 1 - Part D of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services.
 6. The Schemes of Co-ordination for 2010-11 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services.
 7. Harrow's relevant area as set out in Appendix 3 of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services.
 8. Harrow's Fair Access Protocol as set out in Appendix 4 of the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Services.
 9. The following additional tie-breaker - Where applicants lived equidistant from the school or in cases of multiple births where places could not be offered to both/all children, places would be allocated by random computer selection.

Reason for Decision: There was a statutory requirement under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 for admission authorities to determine admission arrangements by 15 April in the determination year (ie by 15 April 2009).

601. **Key Decision - Grant Funding 2009/10:**

The Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services introduced a report, which set out the recommendations for allocation of community grants 2009/10. He stated that as Chairman of the Grants Advisory Panel, he had taken no part in the voting on applications at the Panel's meeting and had left the room whilst the application relating to St Luke's Hospice had been considered and voted upon due to a prejudicial interest.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Grants Advisory Panel had met on 4 March 2009 and considered officers recommendations against the grant applications received. Officer recommendations to the Panel were based on information contained in the application forms, in particular on whether the application met the grants criteria, previous monitoring information and justification for need for the proposed activities. Each application was judged on its own merit.

Officers had recommended that 14 groups receive funding under service level agreements, which amounted to £550,987. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Panel had supported this and that he was recommending this to Cabinet for approval. In terms of the remaining possible grant allocation of £224,971, grant requests amounting to £807,746 had been received. Officers had reviewed all applications against the agreed grants criteria and made recommendations, which allocated a further £221,892, leaving a surplus of £3,078. The Grants Advisory Panel had considered each of the applications and made recommendations for funding. The Portfolio Holder advised that he had further reviewed the recommendations with a view to ensuring adherence to the Grants criteria. As a result, some of the Panel's recommendations had been adjusted and the revised allocations were detailed in column 5 of Appendix to the report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services. This resulted in the allocation of £769,310, leaving a further £6,646 as yet unallocated.

RESOLVED: That the grant recommendations, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services, be approved and funding to voluntary organisations for 2009/10 be confirmed.

Reason for Decision: To approve the allocation of funding to voluntary organisations for 2009/10.

602. **Exclusion of the Press and Public:**

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of confidential

information in breach of an obligation of confidence, or of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:

<u>Agenda Item No</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
20.	Key Decision – Council Insurance Renewal 1 April 2009	Information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
21.	Key Decision – Acquisition of Freehold Property	Information under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

603. **Key Decision - Council Insurance Renewal 1 April 2009:**
Members considered a confidential report of the Corporate Director of Finance which related to a Part I report appearing elsewhere on the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To obtain authority for officers to finalise the Council's insurance arrangements.

(See also Minute 598).

604. **Any Other Urgent Business - Key Decision - Acquisition of Freehold Property:**
The Chairman indicated that there was an urgent confidential report of the Corporate Director of Place Shaping which had been circulated on the third supplemental agenda. The item proposed the acquisition of a freehold property and required urgent consideration due to the seller's closing date for the sale of the property.

The Chairman indicated that the proposal did not require Council approval with the proviso that the costs were contained within the existing capital budget.

Members had a lengthy and detailed discussion on this item and it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the acquisition, by the Council, of the freehold interest in respect of the property detailed in the report of the Corporate Director of Place Shaping and shown, for illustration purposes only, edged in bold and coloured blue on the Site Plan at Appendix 1, be approved;

(2) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Place Shaping, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder, Major Contracts and Property, to negotiate the purchase price, to the maximum value detailed in the report and the capital expenditure required to enable this purchase be approved;

(3) the related expenditure in respect of Stamp Duty Land Tax and Professional Fees, up to the maximum amount detailed in the report of the Corporate Director of Place Shaping be approved;

(4) the financial implications set out by the Corporate Director of Finance within the report be noted.

Reason for Decision: To create an opportunity to acquire property at a key location, within one of the Council's district shopping centres, for the best interests of the local resident and business community.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.05 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR DAVID ASHTON
Chairman