

Supporting Information for Developing a Year Ahead Statement 2010

Evidence Base

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Introduction

1 The Year Ahead Statement reviews where the Council was at the end of 2009/10 in financial, policy and performance terms, and reviews what can already be glimpsed of the policy landscape for 2011/12 to help the Council to set priorities for the next financial year.

2 In previous years, the Statement has looked more closely at improvement opportunities than at the Council's various success stories. While successes do need to be consolidated, built on and celebrated, the bulk of service planning is usually concentrated around new legislative or policy requirements or services that are not performing as well as they could or as well the Council would like. In the past, the Statement has painted a more cautious picture of the Council and its services than, for example, self-assessment documents.

3 This year, however, the overriding policy requirement from Government is about reducing public expenditure by unprecedented amounts. The focus of the forward looking aspects of the Statement is, therefore, doing more with less, increasing efficiency and effectiveness and facing the probability of having to cease providing some services completely and reducing the level and standard of others. At the same time, there is a local focus on working more closely with our community both to help to shape the difficult decisions that lie ahead and to identify opportunities for volunteering and involvement in social action.

What this document is used for

4 This document offers the opportunity to review the Council's vision and corporate priorities. The priorities arrived at through the Year Ahead Statement process drive detailed service planning for 2011/12 that began in late July 2010 and carries on through the autumn in parallel with the budget process. Details of what will be done next year will be included in the service plans developed as part of this process. The priorities will also inform development of the Council's corporate plan.

5 Having reviewed the Council's current position, the uncertain prospects for public services over the coming period and the needs and aspirations of local people, the Council is proposing to consult residents on the following vision for the Council and four corporate priorities for 2011/12. While these priorities will be reviewed annually in the light of changing experience and needs, it is likely that following the results of consultation they will remain in place throughout the administration's term of office.

The draft vision for the Council is:

“Working together: our Harrow, our Community”

and the draft corporate priorities are:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe;
- United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads;
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need; and
- A Town Centre to be proud of: changing Harrow for the better.

6. Cabinet will be asked to agree the draft vision and priorities for consultation.

The case for the Draft Corporate Priorities

7 The Year Ahead Statement reviews the Council's overall performance and financial position, and places it in the context of the national and local policy agendas and the changing

demographic profile of the borough. This section, however, selects data, trends and policy currents that demonstrate why the draft corporate priorities are important and relevant to Harrow residents.

8. The corporate priorities will guide the Council in making the difficult financial decisions later in this financial year when the impact of the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review is known.

Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe

9 Maintaining a clean, green and safe environment is one of the core functions of a local authority and one which impacts on the quality of life of all residents. Cleanliness of public spaces encourages good and responsible behaviour and reduces anti-social activity including creating litter, vandalism and graffiti. An environment that is thought of as safe encourages people to participate in community and social activities which contribute to further increases in safety through social control of public areas. Clear green policies demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving the environment and encourage all residents to contribute through recycling, saving energy, reducing car usage, and reducing their carbon footprint.

10 Our survey evidence shows that the cleanliness of the streets and other public spaces remain the issue with the second highest level of public support amongst a list of issues that make an area a good place to live and fourth in the list of issues that most need improving in Harrow. The importance that residents place on the cleanliness of the borough can be seen from the continued high priority given to making improvements in this service on top of the significant increases in public satisfaction achieved last year. In short, the public feel that the Council is doing well but that there is more to do.

11 Work to improve cleanliness and safety come together in initiatives such as the Weeks of Action programme where an area receives special attention from the Council, the police, and other agencies to address problems and concerns in a joined-up way. The Neighbourhood Champions programme is now approaching 1,000 residents recruited with 660 already trained and 300 awaiting training. The ambition is to have one Champion for every street to let the Council or the Police know about local issues of concern. All residents also now have the opportunity to report issues to and ask questions of the Police at the Civic Centre, where a Police Information Centre has been established.

12 The Council intends to build on the success of these initiatives to continue to improve the cleanliness of the Borough, the quality of its environment and community safety.

United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads

13 Local data tells us that the Council is improving in this area, but needs to do more, especially as involving communities will become even more important with the nature of the challenges facing the Council over the coming years. The Place Survey data (from 2008 and 2009) below highlights where public perception has improved on how the Council informs and engages with residents and how residents feel that they get along with one another.

Place Survey Results	2009 Result	2008 Result	Change from 2008 to 2009	London Best Quartile 2008
Do you strongly or very strongly feel that you belong to your immediate neighbourhood	54%	55%	-1	51%
Do you agree that local public services promote the interests of local residents	38%	35%	+3	43%

Place Survey Results	2009 Result	2008 Result	Change from 2008 to 2009	London Best Quartile 2008
Do you agree that local public services act on the concerns of local people	42%	41%	+1	44%
Do you agree that local public services treat all types of people fairly	70%	68%	+2	70%
Do you agree that you can influence decisions affecting your area	33%	32%	+1	34%
Do you feel well informed about what the Council is doing	38%	31%	+7	37%
Would you like to be more involved in the decisions affecting your local area	40%	39%	+1	42%
Do you volunteer at least once a month	24%	24%	-	21%
Have you been treated with respect and consideration by your local public services all or most of the time	66%	64%	+2	67%

14 However, more recent data from the Council's Reputation Tracker in March 2010 suggests that the challenge for engagement is greater. This is evidenced in particular below by the -17% 'net agree' for residents who feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. This demonstrates the size of the challenge and will be an essential indicator of how the Council achieves this priority.

- 29% of residents agree that the Council takes account of residents' views when making decisions, whilst 34% disagree (a 'net agree' of -5%)
- 30% of residents agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, whilst 47% disagree (a 'net agree' of -17%)
- Overall satisfaction with Council fell from March 2009 to March 2010 from 58% to 52%

15 .Community involvement can be in many forms from helping us to know what sorts of services are needed, where and when and how best to arrange for people to make use of them through to helping to deliver services through a voluntary or community organisation. For many people who use our services, involvement might include completing a comments card to highlight good aspects and things that could be improved; a survey to find out what is most important to local people or joining a focus group to look at a specific service in more detail.

16 The Council will be putting additional emphasis on community involvement in the future to encourage greater participation from all parts of the community. We will try to create the conditions in which local people can have a bigger say in the development of their area and the services that are available, including getting involved in delivering some of them, for example, by becoming a Neighbourhood Champion.

17 As well as involvement with Council services, we will also encourage people to be more active in their community generally for the benefits this brings to volunteers, who can gain in confidence and self esteem and obtain additional skills, to communities, by bringing people together to share experiences and to the Borough as a whole, by increasing pride in Harrow and its people.

18 Community involvement is particularly important for Harrow, which has a very diverse population ethnically and religiously. Community cohesion is measured by how many people agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together and Harrow's score is just above the average for Outer London, with 76% agreeing. Community cohesion is built by shared activities, information and discussion and experiences. The Council will promote

events and meetings both to gather views of residents and facilitate residents getting together. It will continue to provide information, not least through its e-newsletter which now has almost 13,000 recipients.

Supporting and protecting people who are most in need

19 Many people in Harrow will need the help and support of the Council at some time in their lives. The Council provides services for all children through nurseries, schools and Children's Centres and a range of activities for young people such as youth clubs, holiday play schemes and the summer university. However, we also provide additional help for young people with specific difficulties, disabilities or other problems. We safeguard young people at risk and work with young people at risk of offending. We look after Children and young people who for whatever reason, can no longer live at home and support young people who have problems with drugs or alcohol.

20 Similarly, we support older people who need help to continue living in the own homes and to extend their degree of independence. In particular, we are continuing to promote personalised budgets for people assessed as being in need of care to enable them to tailor a support package exactly to their needs. Where people agree that it would be beneficial, we will provide older people with an intensive package of support to 're-able' them to undertake everyday domestic tasks which they may otherwise feel they could not perform. We also safeguard and protect older people at risk.

21 We also provide support for people of all ages who have a disability, either by advice and information or, where appropriate, through practical help and care. Many forms of support are available through our Neighbourhood Resource Centres in the Borough. Support can take the form of help in finding and maintaining employment, access to support groups and activities or specialist equipment. We also provide support to carers through advice and information and assessments of their specific needs.

22 Other groups that receive support include people with mental health needs, families, people seeking to re-enter employment, and new arrivals.

23 For all of these groups and others not included here, the Council will undertake assessments of need to target help and support to those most in need. The pressure on public service budgets now and in the immediate future means that there will be fewer universally available services and that the resources that are available will have to be spent where they can do the most good.

A Town Centre to be proud of: changing Harrow for the better.

24 Harrow Town Centre is a Metropolitan Shopping Centre – one of 11 in London. It is, however, threatened by the new development of Westfield at Shepherd's Bush, the proposed creation of a new Town Centre at Cricklewood/Brent Cross and the shopping centre at Watford. In response to these challenges and the need for further investment in the Town Centre, the Council has adopted a plan for the Harrow/Wealdstone Corridor. For this purpose, the area is known as the Intensification Area, which means that it is a place where new and additional development is expected and, provided it is of the right sort, will be welcomed. To direct the way in which this area is revitalised and other potential large developments, the Council has set up a Major Developments Panel.

25 The Town Centre is a symbol of and gateway for the whole Borough and has a significance for the success of many businesses throughout the Borough. Getting the development and expansion of the Town Centre right will provide confidence for the future

of district centres across the borough. A successful Town Centre should also provide civic pride in the borough and indicate the capacity of the Council and partners to improve the borough as a whole.

26 It is also important to recognise that the borough has many more district Town Centres and that a focus solely on Harrow Town Centre must not be to the detriment of these. The district centres are important to the prosperity of the borough and the sense of community and neighbourhood. Through the Major Developments Panel and Area Action Plans, the Council will work with local traders, residents and developers to create a network of thriving district centres and communities to manage the successful regeneration of key sites and areas of importance across the borough.

Overall summary

Performance

27 Residents report increased satisfaction with a range of specific services provided by the Council. This improvement trend was also recognised by the Council's inspection and assessment processes, although overall levels of satisfaction are too low. In December 2009, the Audit Commission judged Harrow Council to be one of just a handful of local authorities across the whole of the UK to have improved against their new tougher inspection regime. The Council moved up to an overall score of 3 (out of 4) – the highest score the Council has ever achieved. The Audit Commission said that the Council provides good value for money; had invested in clear priorities, which are the areas that residents want to see improved; had improved against two thirds of the performance measures; and had put in place the foundations for becoming a high performing authority.

28 In addition, Adults' Services moved up to a score of 3 (out of 4) also for the first time. The Care Quality Commission stated that *'leadership is strong and there is a clear strategic direction, with a step change in performance. Many more people received a Personal Budget, Direct Payment or Carers Service and people are noticing the differences, particularly people with learning disabilities and carers.* They specifically highlighted the following areas that they felt had delivered considerable improvements:

- Personal Budgets (one of the London and National leaders);
- Carers Services (Highest in London and top 8 Nationally);
- Engagement with Service Users (Most comprehensive consultation in Social Care Mori has ever carried out); and
- Shifts from Residential care to support in the community.

29 The Ofsted rating of 3 (out of 4) for Children's Services was maintained. Ofsted commented that *'The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The proportion of schools that are good or better is higher than in similar areas and national averages.'* *'Young children get a secure start and show achievement in line with similar areas and that found nationally in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A much higher proportion of nurseries is good or better than in similar areas and the proportion nationally.'* *'Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is at least in line with similar areas and broadly in line with or better than the national figure.'*

30 The Council was the only highly commended finalist in the Local Government Chronicle 'Most Improved Council' awards. A range of other awards for particular services were achieved throughout the year. There is no doubt that these awards reflect the hard work of the Council's staff as well as their innovation and dedication.

31 The most prized accolade for any authority, however, is the level of resident satisfaction with the Council itself as well as with individual services. Here there was significant progress as well as some evidence of a need to understand better and respond more effectively to residents' aspirations, although overall satisfaction levels are still too low. The Interim Place Survey conducted in the autumn of 2009 measured the level of satisfaction with some of the universal services, such as street cleansing, refuse collection and recycling, which improved significantly in 2009/10 while overall satisfaction with the Council improved only very slightly and within the sampling margin for error. 16 of the 18 Flagship Actions for last year had been achieved or were forecast to have been achieved by the end of the year and data for one of the other two has still to be finalised.

Finance

32 Over the last four years, the Council has delivered savings of some £45m. Despite the scale of these spending reductions, last year the Council achieved an under spend of £1.7m. The accuracy of forecasting during the year improved considerably which is an indicator that financial management is getting stronger. Financial pressures remain in the medium term but a balanced budget was agreed at Council with a 0% Council Tax increase.

33 The new Coalition Government introduced an emergency budget in June 2010 which has resulted in the Council having to make some in-year savings. Agreed budgets for a number of services have had to be reduced as grants supporting those services have been cut. In addition, other funding streams that had not been added into service budgets have been cut, reducing the Council's ability to deliver services. Most notably, the Local Area Agreement Reward Grant, which Harrow Strategic Partnership had earned by meeting stretching targets over the last three years, was reduced by at least 50% jeopardising a range of investment projects and including aspects of the Better Deal for Residents Programme. Further, some reductions in Government Departmental spending has resulted in cuts to programmes delivered by local authorities including the loss of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s. At the time of writing, the in-year cuts amount to £5.6m including £1.5m of capital and, in addition to those already mentioned, impact on education and health access programmes for migrants, and programmes supporting young people with special educational needs, harnessing technology and the 14-19 diploma.

34 Since the emergency budget, other announcements have been made that will impact on the Council and the borough. First, the Building Schools for the Future programme has been abolished with the cancellation, nationally, of 739 school rebuilding and modernisation schemes. The local impact of this announcement is limited as Harrow was not in the Building Schools for the Future programme and our investment had been restricted to the time and effort involved in demonstrating our readiness to deliver and trying to get into the programme. However, the programme offered a hope that the new and high quality accommodation could be provided at schools operating with temporary buildings.

35 Secondly, 102 Magistrates' and 59 Crown Courts have been earmarked for closure, including Harrow Magistrates' Court. If this proposal is carried through, there will be an impact on access to justice and increases in costs for Council and Police personnel attending court. It is estimated that these additional costs would amount to a minimum of £80,000 for the Council, with a significant sum for the Police and some costs falling on the Probation Service. There would also be costs arising for the Courts service from compensating prosecution witnesses for additional travelling time.

36 An announcement has also been made that capping the amount of Housing Benefit payable will be introduced and indicating that benefit levels will be reduced for claimants who

have been unemployed for a year or more. This proposal will affect 381 five bed or larger properties in Harrow where the new maximum benefit level is lower than the current rent charged. The impact of this may be increased overcrowding as families move to smaller but affordable property or increases in homelessness. There may also be an impact from families moving from inner London boroughs which will effectively become a no-go area for anybody on a low income looking to rent in the private sector. If this occurs, there will be increased competition for the stock of larger private sector properties making it more difficult for the Council to find property to accommodate families and, potentially, increase the pressure of education and social care services by increasing the number of their clients. Most recently, the Playbuilder programme for renewing playgrounds has been suspended.

37 Forecasting the financial position for the coming year or so is even more difficult than usual with the degree of uncertainty about the economy generally and public expenditure totals in particular. This may become clearer once the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) is published in October. Consultation about the funding formula which will be determined in the CSR has raised concerns that the 'floor' – a minimum funding level – may not be retained which could have significant consequences for the Council and other London authorities. There are also consultations about changes to the local authority pension scheme.

38 Nonetheless, the Council is planning for a budget gap in 2011/12 of £16m. The Better Deal for Residents Programme, which is described in more detail below, is in part a response to reducing revenues by seeking to organise public services in Harrow better to achieve more with less. This programme will make a substantial contribution to reducing the Council's costs although other difficult spending decisions are likely to be needed as well.

39 Spending reductions over the last four years have largely been achieved through incremental efficiencies, that is, by making each pound spent work harder through re-organisations, better IT, better processes etc. The Council is already one of the most effective in London in achieving high performance for low levels of expenditure and so there must be doubt as to the scope for this approach to yield further substantial sums. If this is the case, then the Council will need to consider reducing service levels or ceasing to provide some services at all.

40 At a macro-level, there is a danger that public expenditure reductions of the magnitude currently discussed by Government could reduce demand in the economy to such an extent that the country re-enters recession, underlining the need to continue to mitigate the impact of recession on Harrow residents and businesses. One of the impacts of the down turn has been a reduction in income the Council receives from fees and charges for services ranging from parking to planning. Other issues will also affect the way in which the Council undertakes its business including the Government's stated plans for a radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups which will include a review of local government finance. One further announcement is that increases in Council Tax above a level to be set by the Secretary of State would be subject to a binding local referendum. It is estimated that to run a referendum in Harrow would cost £200,000.

41 A recent paper detailing the impact of public spending reductions nationally has been analysed by colleagues in the Health Sector to show the possible impact on local public sector employment. It suggests that there are currently 18,100 people employed in the Public Sector (including education) in Harrow. The report then suggests that 1,534 jobs will be lost in the Public Sector in Harrow by 2016. This number of job losses places Harrow above the national average at 132 out of 408 areas, and above the average for other London Boroughs.

Policy

42 The year to come will be dominated by the public sector expenditure reductions promised by the new coalition government. The scale of the reductions required locally is not yet clear although the Government is seeking cuts of between 25% and 40% over the next three years. There should be more clarity about the Government's intentions with the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review scheduled for 20th October this year and details of the Local Government settlement after that. It is currently thought that the settlement will cover two financial years to the end of 2012/13.

43 The Government has also announced a review of local government finance which is expected to report before the end of the next financial settlement. The Coalition Programme for Government says that they will promote the radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups. This will include a review of local government finance. The Programme for Government also promises to phase out the ring-fencing of grants to local government and review the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and to give councils a general power of competence. At present, local authorities can, generally, only do things that are explicitly provided for in legislation. The proposed General Power of Competence would enable the Council to do anything except things that are explicitly prohibited in law.

44 The new coalition Government has abolished the Comprehensive Area Assessment, (CAA) and the Audit Commission and is currently reviewing the way in which Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will work in the future. In place of a national framework for measuring local service quality and financial stewardship, there is an enhanced emphasis on localism – that is the belief that local communities should be able to decide for themselves what standards of service they want and are prepared to pay for. There is an over-riding principle that future assessment regimes will impose a less onerous burden on local authorities. Details of how far and fast these sorts of changes will be made and the impact of devolving responsibility for determining to a greater extent the range and quality of services are, as yet, unknowable.

45 The retreat from a central inspection/assessment and target-driven approach provides space to develop a locally determined agenda and method for measuring progress. Services have begun to consider how to engage residents to create more locally relevant service objectives.

46 There has, however, already been some conflict between Government action and the principle of localism. The Secretary of State has made several policy announcements which seek to set national standards for issues that have previously been determined locally such as the frequency of refuse collection and the content of Council newspapers. Similarly, the Secretary of State for Education has taken power to determine detailed matters relating to academies and the funding of 'free' schools.

47 The Coalition Government will also promote the reform of schools in order to ensure that new providers can enter the state school system in response to parental demand; that all schools have greater freedom over the curriculum; and that all schools are held properly to account. They will fund a significant premium for disadvantaged pupils from outside the schools budget by reductions in spending elsewhere and give parents, teachers, charities and local communities the chance to set up new schools, as part of plans to allow new providers to enter the state school system in response to parental demand. The Academies Act 2010 has already been passed to enable outstanding schools to opt for academy status in time for the beginning of the 2010/11 academic year. None of the schools in Harrow has applied to follow this course yet, but many are eligible because of their 'outstanding' status.

48 The intention to make very significant changes to the way in which the Health Service operates has been announced in a White Paper. This envisages the abolition of Primary Care Trusts in favour of commissioning by consortia of GPs, the creation of a National Public Health Body with local responsibility for public health transferring to local authorities, all hospitals becoming part of a Foundation Trust and the LINK, a public and patient engagement organisation, being altered and rebranded as Health Watch and becoming the responsibility of the local authority to commission. Local authorities would lose the duty to scrutinise the provision of health care which would transfer to a new Health and Well-being Board within the local authority or strategic partnership.

49 Building on the power of the local authority to promote local wellbeing, new statutory arrangements will be set up within local authorities or strategic partnerships for "health and wellbeing boards" to take on:

- assessing the needs of the local population and leading the statutory joint strategic needs assessment;
- promoting integration and partnership across areas, including through promoting joined up commissioning plans across the NHS, social care and public health;
- supporting joint commissioning and pooled budget arrangements, where all parties agree this makes sense; and
- undertaking a scrutiny role in relation to major service redesign.

50 These boards will enable a strategic approach and integration across health and adult social care, children's services, including safeguarding, and the wider local authority agenda. Each local authority will take on the function of joining up the commissioning of local NHS services, social care and health improvement. This represents a significant opportunity for local authorities and/or Partnerships to influence the provision of health services locally. Details of the funding arrangements to support the development and delivery of this function have yet to be announced.

51 There are also fundamental changes proposed for policing, particularly outside London, where there is a prospect of Police Authorities being replaced by directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners to hold Chief Constables to account and the creation of a National Crime Agency to lead the fight against organised crime, protect borders and provide those services best delivered at a national level. For London, it is planned that the Metropolitan Police Authority will be abolished with The GLA taking on scrutiny of the police.

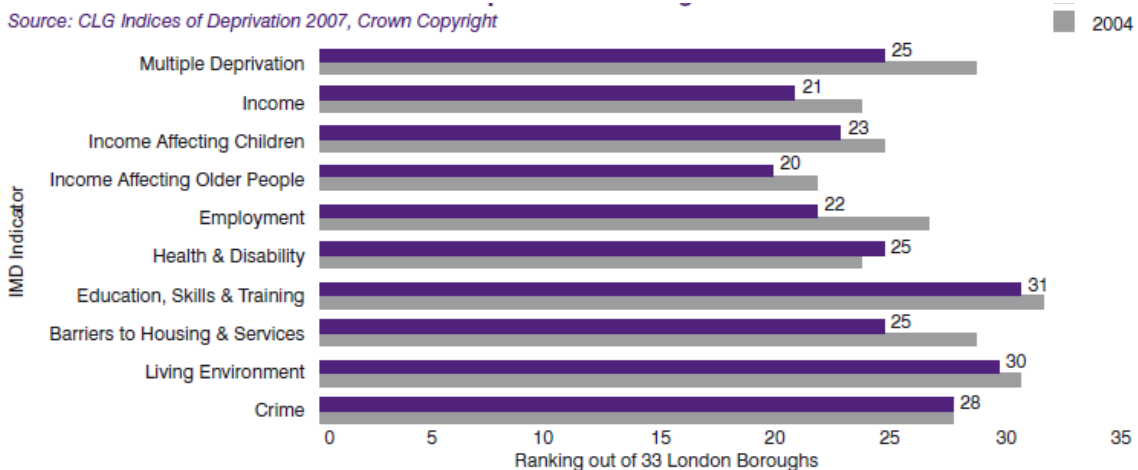
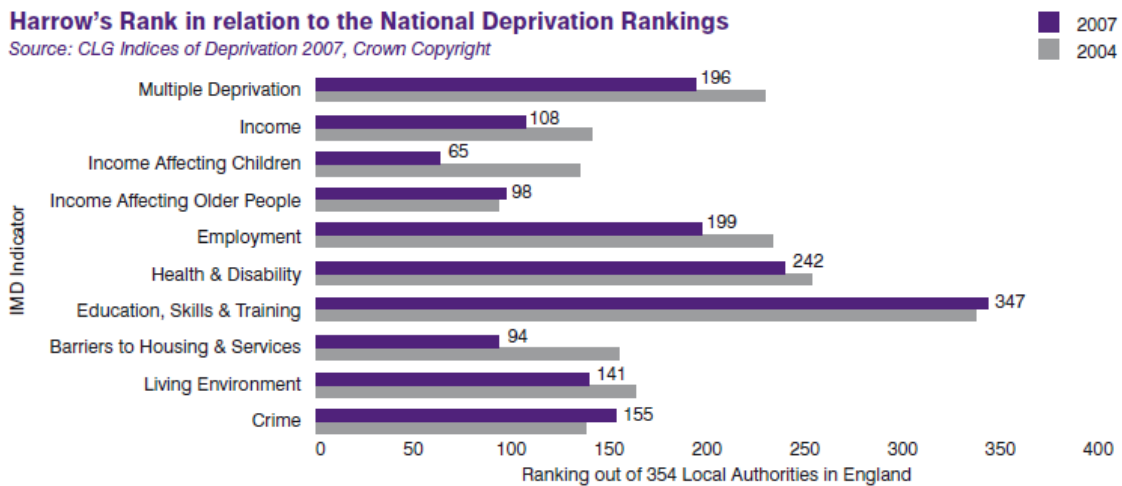
52 Many other changes proposed nationally have exceptions and differences for London where the roles of the Mayor and the GLA are envisaged to expand including the Greater London Authority (GLA) assuming responsibility for the London Development Agency, the Homes and Communities Agency, and, potentially the Royal Parks, and the Port of London Authority. The Government Office for London has already been abolished.

53 A devolution package prepared by the Mayor, London Councils and the London Assembly has been sent to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government setting out proposals for other changes relating to traffic control, waste and recycling, energy and climate change, aspects of planning and regulation, and the awarding of rail franchises. The package proposes where responsibility for these functions should lie between the Mayor, the London Assembly and the Boroughs. The package also identifies functions such as the Olympic Park Legacy and some strategic planning issues where agreement in London has still to be reached and other issues including the future for learning and skills and the London Ambulance Service where further discussion is needed before proposals can be made.

Demographics

54 The 2008 Population Estimates suggests that there were 216,200 people living in Harrow, a 3% increase over the 2001 census figure. The 2007 population estimate by ethnic group suggests that 53% of residents are from minority ethnic groups, including white minority groups compared with 51.1% in 2001. The January 2010 school census shows that 78% of children and young people in Harrow's schools are from minority ethnic groups.

55 The 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) bring together data relating to income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training; barriers to housing and services; living environment; and crime and show Harrow's overall position relative to the country as a whole and to the London average. In all cases, the lower the ranking score, the greater the deprivation so a place with a ranking of 1 is the most deprived and a place with a ranking of 354 is the least deprived in England while the borough with a ranking of 1 is the most deprived and that with a score of 33 is the least deprived in London. The tables below show that, nationally, Harrow's relative deprivation increased on all but 3 of the 10 measures and, against other London Boroughs, increased on all but 1 measure with one other measure staying at the same level.



56 The direction of travel revealed by the IMD scores shows that, on average, the nature of the borough is changing with increases in the relative income deprivation and a sharp increase in the relative income deprivation of children. The measures against which there has been a reduction in relative deprivation, nationally, relate to income for older people, education and skills and crime.

57 Estimates suggest there will be larger increases in the proportion of the population who are young people and who are 80 or more. The table shows the projected growth in whole population over the period 2006-2011 of 6,506 (3.%) but with an increase in the number of young people under 15 of 3,784 (9.8%) and of people aged 80 or more of 1,699 (19.4%)

Year	Age range	Number	Rate of Growth since 2006 %	Proportion %	Total population and % growth from 2006
2006	0-14	38,568	-	17.9	216,003
	80+	8,775	-	4.1	
2011	0-14	40,749	5.654	18.5	220,748: 2.2%
	80+	9,225	5.128	4.2	
2016	0-14	42,123	9.217	19	221,701: 2.6%
	80+	9,820	11.908	4.4	
2021	0-14	42,352	9.811	19.	222,509: 3.%
	80+	10,474	19.361	4.7	

58 An increasing proportion of young people will place additional demands on Children's Service. More older people will be living with complex health problems as well as dementia. This will result in a corresponding increase in need for different health and social care services. More older people will be living alone, often without transport. This may lead to isolation, depression, and alcohol misuse. More older people will be caring for someone else, while in poor health themselves. The longer older people can remain in their own homes, then the greater the pressure on family accommodation.

Performance

59 The Year Ahead Statement has, in the past, considered performance issues mainly in relation to the existing corporate priorities. However, to provide the new administration with as much scope as possible to set new priorities, this year, the Statement will look at performance on a Directorate by Directorate basis.

Adults and Housing

Adult Social Care

60 Work continues on the Adults Excellence Plan "Your Future, Our Future". Performance continues to be strong across a range of indicators and targets have been met or exceeded for the large majority of indicators. The Directorate achieved or was on track to achieve the 5 flagship actions that were within its remit. Highlights include:

- Personal Budgets (PBs) - a high number of people, including people with intensive care needs, have been supported to live in the community;
- 54% of PB holders are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, and this reflects Harrow's diverse community;
- Funding has been secured to develop home based reablement services;
- shop4support has gone live;
- The voluntary Carers Survey showed Harrow to have the highest percentage (just over half) of carers who felt they had all the encouragement and support they need to allow them to carry out their caring role;

- During 09/10 a full-time Employment Champion was appointed to build capacity and identify employment opportunities for Learning Disability (LD) service users. This resulted in 13.6% of Learning Disability service users in employment (compared to 7.7% last year and a target of 12.5%); and
- The IDeA team found that Harrow's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment tells the local story very effectively and has informed local commissioning.

Housing

61 A comprehensive Housing Ambition Plan (HAP) has been developed and was launched at a Housing Services staff event in May which builds on the performance already attained and addresses the identified challenges including:

- The number of affordable homes delivered in the borough exceeded the target of 219 by 47 units (266) for 2009/10;
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation dropped from 708 at the end of 2008/09 to 552 in 2009/10 (against a target of 560), and the government target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation was met one year ahead of schedule;
- The number of non-decent council properties surpassed our target of 30.91% of total stock, with there being only 26% reported as non-decent at year end;
- The number of families with children in Bed and Breakfast over 6 weeks was successfully maintained at 0 in 2009/10. There were also no 16/17 year olds housed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation over the year; and
- The number of private dwellings returned into use exceeded the target of 45%, with 49% being made available for letting again through the use of grants. This is a high regional priority, identified by the London Mayor.

62 Across the Directorate, performance fell below target in relation to the timeliness of provision of social care packages and the average time taken to re-let Council residential property. There were also concerns about data quality relating to the quality and timeliness of housing repairs. A Lean Review of the repairs process has been undertaken to increase the responsiveness of the services and it is intended to bring all aspects of property maintenance together to increase efficiency.

63 There is only one question relevant to Adults and Housing in the Council's public satisfaction survey which asks whether respondents think that older people in the area are able to get the support and services they need to continue to live at home for as long as they want to. The proportion of respondents that agreed that support and services were available was 40%, 1 percentage point lower than in the previous survey. This change is within the sampling margin of error. This question tends to reveal more about the respondents knowledge than satisfaction with the support services available.

Challenges

64 The performance, financial and policy information discussed above suggest that the challenges for Adults will focus around the costs of providing social care for both the aging population and people with complex multiple needs. There will be more older people and, with increasing life expectancy, older old people who may have support and care needs for longer periods. At the same time, the costs of providing care for a small number of, sometimes, young adults with complex needs can be very high and extend over a very long period. Harrow is taking forward reablement and personalisation as critical enablers to supporting older people, both in terms of quality of care and also reducing the financial impact on the public purse.

65 The changes proposed for the National Health Service represent both challenges and opportunities. The immediate pressure for cost reductions may lead to gaps appearing in what are now joined up services and could result in the Council's costs for social care increasing. The transfer of public health responsibilities may offer increased efficiency and cost effectiveness. The review of special needs transport may include some joint provision with hospital transport.

66 For Housing, The Housing Ambition Plan has set out a service improvement programme, especially targeting areas like tenant and leaseholder satisfaction through improving services such as maintenance response rates and reducing the waiting time for major adaptations. The Council may face a challenge in sustaining these improvements over the medium term although if the reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) works to the Council's advantage the risk may be mitigated.

Children's Services

67 Harrow continues to improve the quality of services provided to children, young people and their families. Children and young people are generally safe, mostly in good health, achieve very well, make an outstandingly positive contribution to society and enjoy economic well-being. The Directorate fully achieved 3 of the four flagship actions within its remit and partially completed the fourth. Inspected services are above national average and similar areas for the large majority of services provided or commissioned. The very large majority of indicators are either in line with or above the average for relevant comparator groups.

Highlights include:

- 73% of schools inspected in Harrow since September 2009 have been judged to be outstanding, contrasting with 9% nationally. 100% of Harrow's schools are judged by Ofsted to have good or outstanding standards of behaviour
- Performance is in line with or above comparator averages for the very large majority of social care indicators
- LAA targets have been exceeded for indicators of core assessments, stability of placements of children looked after and the number of extended schools provided.
- 10 children's centres were fully operational by the end of the year, with services reaching nearly 9000 children and carers
- Narrowing the gap:
 - The number of permanent exclusions from Harrow schools has reduced by 14% from the 2007-8 to the 2008-9 academic year (from 57 to 49 permanent exclusions).
 - Six schools involved in Narrowing the Gap have had an "Outstanding" judgement by Ofsted and the target of engaging 50% of schools by 2010 in Harrow Council's Narrowing the Gap programme has been exceeded
 - Key stage 2 attainment of Black African pupils is above target as is ;GCSE attainment of Black African pupils
 - GCSE attainment of White pupils in receipt of free school meals is above target.
- GCSE results continue to improve year on year and are above national averages.
- 1 of 9 children looked after taking GCSEs in 2009 achieved 5 A-C including English and Maths.
- The annual recorded number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) remains low (2.8%) given the continued impact of the recession on the labour market. Continued good practice in supporting the most vulnerable young people will be focused to decrease the number of care leavers and young offenders who are NEET;

- Harrow's YOT received a very positive judgement as a result of the YJB PIF review in 2010 which concluded that the YOT is 'performing excellently against national indicators with good capacity and capability to sustain and improve performance'.

Performance against the following indicators was below target:

- Key stage 2 attainment of White pupils in receipt of free school meals
- GCSE attainment of children looked after.

Challenges

68. Narrowing the educational attainment gap – the nature of Harrow's school performance and the relatively small size of cohorts we are trying to support in narrowing the attainment gap make this a continual challenge, despite 2010 seeing some positive movement across some cohorts. This area was also raised by both Ofsted and the Audit Commission in their 2009 reviews. Educational attainment of children looked after continues to be below target.

Other key challenges include:

- Managing increased pressure on social care – notably around initial assessments and progressing Child Protection Plans
- Providing hot school meals across all schools.
- Reducing authorised absence and continuing to reduce permanent exclusions
- Overrepresentation of some ethnic groups amongst young offenders
- Increasing the take up rate of formal childcare

69. The population projections for 2006 and 2011 show the rate of increase in the number of young people in the borough will be more than twice the rate of increase of the population as a whole and the increase in the proportion of young people in the borough increases volume of demand for children's and young peoples services.

70. Changes in the school population reflect significant incoming population to Harrow, with new arrivals replacing some of the more established and stable communities in the borough. The incoming population tends to have a higher level of vulnerability and this is reflected in increasing levels of deprivation affecting children and young families (IMD 2007). This presents challenges for Harrow's schools and other services for children.

71. Referrals to social care increased significantly during 2009-10 and although some high profile national cases contributed to this, the rates show no signs of returning to previous levels. The numbers of children with Child Protection Plans at the end of 2009-10 was over 180, a major increase on previous years.

72. A particular challenge is faced in continuing to provide high quality young people's services; these are often seen as lower priority than schools and child protection when funding decisions are taken. However, it is important to recognise the positive long-term effect of young people's engagement in positive activities, and the contribution this makes locally in areas such as community cohesion and low crime rates.

Community and Environment

73. There were 6 Flagship Actions associated with the Directorate, all of which were achieved.

74. Beyond the flagship actions, performance was very good with 82% of the indicators in the Corporate Scorecard above target, and these included:

- The Council's target for planting an additional 850 trees was exceeded by almost 6%;
- Improved street and environmental cleanliness – litter;
- Improved street and environmental cleanliness - detritus;
- Improved street and environmental cleanliness - fly posting;
- Building resilience to violent extremism;
- Adult participation in sport;
- % of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area; and
- Migrants' English Language skills and knowledge.

The exceptions included

- Participation in regular volunteering; and
- Engagement in the Arts.

75 Many of the services delivered by the Community and Environment Directorate are included in the Council's public satisfaction survey. The relevant results are:

Question: Are you satisfied or very satisfied with the Council's service of	2009 Result	2008 Result	Change from 08 to 09
keeping public land free from litter and refuse	55%	46%	+9
Refuse collection	72%	65%	+7
Doorstep recycling	70%	65%	+5
Local tips/household waste recycling centres	72%	67%	+5
Parks and Open spaces	63%	59%	+4
Do you think that the following are not a problem at all or not a big problem			
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	85%	86%	-1
Teenagers hanging about the streets	58%	55%	+3
Rubbish and litter lying around	54%	50%	+4
Vandalism, graffiti and deliberate damage to property or vehicles	66%	61%	+5
People using or dealing drugs	67%	65%	+2
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	72%	67%	+5
Abandoned or burnt out cars	90%	88%	+2
Are you satisfied with your area as a place to live	72%	71	+1
Do you strongly or very strongly feel that you belong to your immediate neighbourhood	54%	55%	-1
Do you agree that local public services promote the interests of local residents	38%	35%	+3
Do you agree that local public services act on the concerns of local people	42%	41%	+1
Do you agree that local public services treat all types of people fairly	70%	68%	+2
Do you agree that you can influence decisions affecting your area	33%	32%	+1

Question	2009 Result	2008 Result	Change from 08 to 09
Would you like to be more involved in the decisions affecting your local area	40%	39%	+1
Do you volunteer at least once a month	24%	24%	-
Do you agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together	76%	76%	-
Is there a problem in your local area about people treating each other without respect and consideration	Yes 29% No 71%	Yes 31% No 69%	Yes +2 No -2
Have you been treated with respect and consideration by your local public services all or most of the time	66%	64%	+2

76 The survey results show a very positive response to the investment made in public realm services over recent years with satisfaction with services now at or slightly above the Outer London average.

Challenges

77 The scores for community cohesion measures including people from different background as getting on well together and people being treated fairly and with respect by each other and by public services which are better than the Outer London average. These may be threatened by increasing demand for public services driven by increases in relative deprivation at the same time as decreasing access to public services driven by expenditure reductions. Reductions in public spending could lead to a greater competition for public services, which in turn may adversely impact our current levels of community cohesion. With Harrow's level of both ethnic and religious diversity, this will remain a challenge.

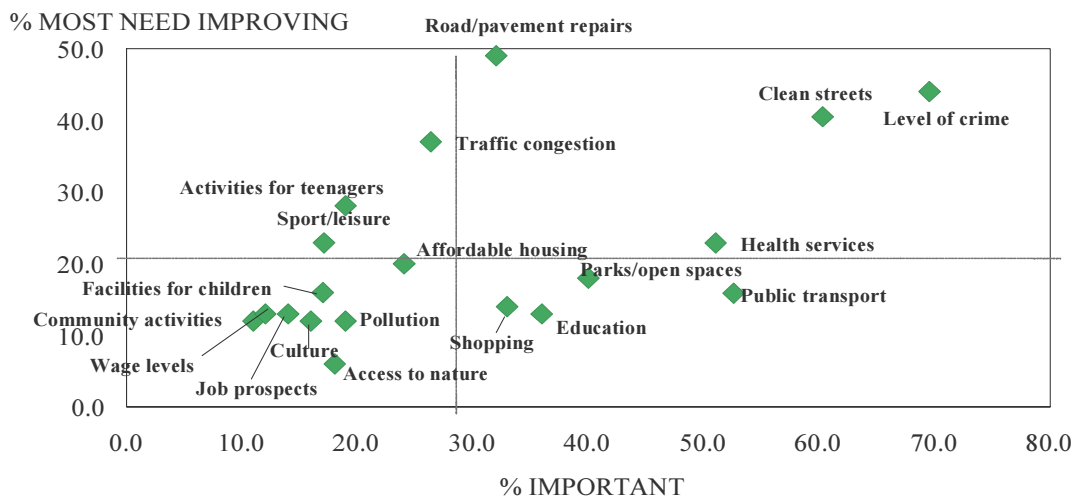
78 Sports activity may be a challenge in the face of significant funding reductions given that Harrow has the fourth lowest adult participation rate in sport amongst London Boroughs (Active People Survey October 2009).

79 The Council's public satisfaction survey asks respondents what, from a list of services, is most important in making a place a good place to live and, from the same list of services, what most needs improving in Harrow. When these results are plotted together, services in the bottom half of the chart below are regarded as performing well or satisfactorily, with those to the right hand end being thought of as important to the quality of life.

80 Climate Change – this was an area that the Audit Commission suggested the Council and partners focus on as part of the last CAA. The local impact the Council and partners can have is relatively small for the borough as a whole, but improvements in physical infrastructure will support this, as will reducing road traffic and congestion.

81 Services in the top half of the chart are thought of as being in need of improvement with those to the right, and especially those in the top right hand quadrant being those that both need improving locally and are of high significance in determining attitudes towards the area. For the last three years, of the things that are most important to make an area a good place to live, roads and pavement repairs have been the most in need of improvement followed by the level of crime and the cleanliness of the streets. In response to these findings, the Council has promoted the creation of Neighbourhood Champions to help address environmental and community safety issues and is making Smartwater – a proprietary property making product – available at no cost to residents throughout the borough.

Place Survey – important vs needs improving: 2009



Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI



Place Shaping

82 There were three Flagship Actions associated with the Directorate of which, two have been fully achieved and the other, partially achieved. Beyond flagship actions, performance is very good with 75% of the indicators being above target including processing major, minor and other planning applications within the relevant target time. The one indicator where performance is below target relates to the milestones in adopting the Local Development Framework.

83 Work has continued to support the property aspects of the Better Deal for Residents Programme and the following milestones have been achieved:

- Consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Option, which includes the Harrow Intensification Area, closed in mid January 2010 with broad, if qualified, support for the spatial vision;
- Work began on a delivery programme and a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) (to reflect Draft London Plan) recommended by GLA. A revised timetable is being prepared in order to align this with Council transformation programme;
- The Harrow Town Centre Design Guide has evolved into a wider project reflecting the London Plan and Core Strategy aspirations for the Harrow/Wealdstone central area and will form the basis of an Intensification Area Action Plan;
- The Hardship Rate Relief Fund was promoted through Business Matters;
- The Xcite for Parents project was launched, the staff team is in place and recruitment to the project has commenced;
- The Credit Union was launched to voluntary, private and statutory sector partners, Harrow Council, NHS Harrow; and
- Harrow Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD) have employed between them 19 unemployed young people through the Future Job Fund.

Challenges

84 Employment: support for businesses – although there is now data to suggest that the economy is starting to come out of recession, there are still questions as to whether this can be sustained following the retraction of public expenditure. More locally, Harrow's business make up is of small and medium size enterprises, which could be more at risk should we enter a 'double-dip' recession. Those that do prosper and seek to expand, often leave the borough, most commonly in search of suitable and affordable premises. This suggests that the challenge in this area is about both business retention and business growth.

85 Town Centre regeneration. The Town Centre needs to be improved to safeguard jobs and prosperity. In comparison with other Town Centres in north-west London, Harrow is weathering the current economic conditions very well but it is slowly losing Town Centre businesses and the vacancy rate is increasing.

Chief Executives, Corporate Finance and Legal and Democratic Services

86 Progress in delivering the Council Improvement Programme remains strong. The corporate scorecard for customer services/corporate health shows that performance against 71% of indicators is ahead of target. Performance highlights include:

- The proportion of calls answered in 30 seconds in the contact centre overall is 82% against a target of 90%;
- Average waiting times in the One Stop Shop fell to 16 minutes and 20 seconds against a target of 15 minutes, and it is expected that a revised Housing Benefits process will reduce waiting times in the medium term;
- Satisfaction with the contact centre is ahead of target and satisfaction with the One Stop Shop remains at 95%;
- Work continues to migrate services into Access Harrow: Housing services have now been introduced; Registrars services have been integrated;
- Successful channel migration is further evidenced by the number of web forms received and processed per month increasing from 915 in Q3 to 1527 in Q4;
- Overall sickness absence across the Council fell to 7.91 days per Full Time Equivalent compared to 8.73 in 2008/09 and against a target of 8.45;
- The benefits caseload continues to grow and is now over 19,000, which is a 15% increase since April 2008. but the average time for processing new benefits claims and changes of circumstances information is better than target;
- The rate of customer issues resolved at first contact is above target;
- The satisfaction rate with the professionalism, resolution and speed of response at the Customer Contact Centre is ahead of target; and
- The percentage of Council Tax collected is also better than target.

The indicators with performance below target include:

- Email and web forms acknowledged within 24 hours and replied to within 5 working days;
- The percentage of telephone calls answered within 5 rings or 30 seconds;
- Debt collected as a percentage of net debt; and
- The percentage of invoices paid on time.

Overall satisfaction

87 The Council's public satisfaction survey asks "Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Harrow Council runs things?" In 2008, those satisfied or very satisfied were 39% of respondents compared with the Outer London average score of 42%. By 2009, the percentage satisfied or very satisfied had increased to 40%.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

88 Although the Coalition Government has ceased work on the current Assessment and announced that the current framework for assessment and inspection will be abolished, the results from the 2009 assessment highlighted the issues that would have formed the core of the assessment for 2010. There were:

- Voluntary groups within Harrow have a low sense of being able to influence decisions, particularly of the health service;
- There is significant challenge to reduce carbon usage and pollution;
- The proportion of people who take regular exercise is lower than elsewhere in London or England;
- One in five adults in Harrow is obese and this is worse than the London average;
- Harrow has a high level of car usage and one of the highest rates in London for people driving their children to school;
- There has been an increasing trend in wounding, interference with vehicles and, more recently, a slight increase in burglaries; and
- There remains a large gap between the lowest achieving children and the rest at Foundation stage.

89 Actions were put in place to address all of these issues last year and the Council had prepared evidence of the improvements and initiatives put in place to address these highlighted areas.

Challenges

90 There are several challenges identified that will need to be addressed on a Council-wide basis. These include:

- Service pressures and volumes – through the impact of recession and other factors the volumes of activity that the Council has to deal with in specific services is creating growth pressures, e.g. Children's Services, Adults, and Benefits with additional potential demand arising from future Government policy direction;
- Public satisfaction levels – these remain low for the Council as a whole, specifically around overall satisfaction and value for money. Individual services fare better with resident perceptions than the Council overall although, in places, these still lag behind London trends; and
- Resources - The funding pressures on the Council will have a significant impact upon what the Council can afford to deliver and how it should go about delivering services. As context, this needs to be considered against all of the other challenges.

Conclusions

91 Overall, performance has improved over the last year with 73% of indicators included in corporate scorecards ahead of target and 86% of flagship actions achieved. Despite this success, satisfaction with the Council overall remains below the Outer London Average.

Finance and Value for Money

92 The Council delivered a final outturn underspend of £1.7m in 2009/10, although there was an overspend in Children's Services of £1.9m. In the current year, 2010/11, pressures are being experienced in Children's and Community and Environment Services. The expectation of the funding gap is £16m in 2011/12 and £14m in 2012/13.

93 The recent Coalition Government announcement of £6.2bn in-year public sector savings has required a £5.6m (£4.1m revenue) in year contribution from the Council, equating to more than 2% of the controllable budget. The main funding cuts can be itemised as follows:

- Area based grant cut by £1.3m;
- Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) funding cut by £350k; and
- Local Area Agreement (LAA) Reward Grant cut by 50% or £2.3m

94 The in-year cuts give an indication of what is to come in the next comprehensive spending review and local government settlement for 2011-12 to 2013-14, and of the scale of the funding reductions that the Council will face in the medium term.

Value for money (This information is taken from the CIPFA Statistical Review)

95 Harrow's service expenditure, weighted by the resident population, is estimated to be the sixth lowest of all 32 London boroughs (excluding City of London) for 2009/10. Spend is additionally the fifth lowest in the nearest neighbour group of 16 Outer London authorities. This volume compares favourably to both the nearest neighbour and all London borough averages, with estimated total expenditure per head of £1,702 and £1,870 respectively.

96 Harrow's expenditure per head for 2009/10 was £1,510, an increased of £4 from 2008/09. The average spending per head in the nearest neighbour group was £1,702 and for all London Boroughs, £1,870. Harrow's expenditure per head on each service against our nearest neighbours is shown in the table below.

Service	Harrow spend per head (and ranking amongst nearest neighbours where 1 is the highest spend)	Average spend per head of nearest neighbours
Education	£837 (13 th out of 16)	£945
Adults Social care	£281 (8 th out of 16)	£283
Children's social care	£107 (10 th out of 16)	£132
Environmental services	£78.78 (11 th out of 16)	£96.13
Planning	£13.59 (3 rd out of 16)	£11.61
Highways and transportation	£40.75 (12 th out of 16)	£49.77
Housing	£40.41 (4 th out of 16)	£35.29
Cultural Services	£42.30 (13 th out of 16)	£55.23
Central and other services	£72.54 (7 th out of 16)	£73.07
Total spend*	£1,5103.37 (5 th out of 16)	£1,681.10

* Totals do not match those given in the summary data and quoted elsewhere in this report.

97 Average band "D" equivalent council tax for the local services element (i.e. the element under Harrow's control) for 2009/10 is the fourth highest of all London boroughs and the fourth highest in the nearest neighbour group. The level of formula grant allocated to Harrow is the eighth lowest both within London and seventh lowest within the nearest neighbour group (in terms of per head of population), receiving an average of £53.22 less per head than the

nearest neighbour average and £223 less than the all London average. Including specific and special grants, Harrow's total grant allocation is £348 less per head than the nearest neighbour and £469 less per head than the London average, being the fifth lowest across London.

98 As in previous years, the council tax collection rate within Harrow is above average but the national non-domestic rate collection rate lags behind both the averages of the nearest neighbour group and all London boroughs. This may be due to the large number of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Harrow which can make collection more complex.

99 Capital Expenditure per head of population was the tenth highest of all London boroughs in England in 2008/09 and the highest in the nearest neighbour group. Although outstanding external debt per head of population was higher than the nearest neighbours' group average, it was significantly below the all London average.

100 The Council's public satisfaction survey showed that, in 2008, 24% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council provides value for money compared with an Outer London average score of 30% and a London-wide average 34%. By 2009, the value for money score had increased to 25%.

Conclusion

101 Harrow continues to demonstrate that it achieves very good value for money with performance levels per £1 of expenditure high across most service areas, even if this is not widely appreciated by the public. This suggests that the scope for making further significant efficiency savings is limited with many of the most easily achievable economies having already been made.

Policy context

National Policy

102 The Policy framework for the future is not yet fully formed since the election in May 2010 of a new coalition Government and a new Labour administration locally.

103 At the Government level, the overarching theme is reducing the fiscal deficit of £156bn through spending reductions and tax rises. The greater proportion, 80%, is anticipated to be achieved by spending reductions. The Prime Minister has spoken of spending reductions that will change the British way of life, but in a way that strengthens and unites the country. Following an initial spending reduction of some £6.2bn with immediate effect leading to in-year cuts in 2010/11 of £5.6m, including £1.5m of capital, there was an emergency budget on 22nd June to announce the tax and spending changes proposed to begin addressing the deficit. This budget has begun, and those that follow, are likely to continue to reverse the growth in funding to local authorities year on year that has previously recognised increasing costs due both to inflation and new duties and responsibilities, as well as reducing some of the funding streams that currently exist. The best current estimate of the impact on the Council is that, without taking urgent and sustained action, the gap between income and expenditure will be in the region of £50m by the next Council election

104 The coalition Government has also published a 'Programme for Government' setting out their intentions in a wide range of fields. For local government, the Government states that it is time for a fundamental shift of power from Westminster to the people. It will promote localism, decentralisation and democratic engagement, and end the era of top-down

government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals. Specific proposals include:

- Changes to the Planning Framework with more decision-making at Council level and the abolition of regional spatial strategies and targets, except for London;
- Providing local government with a general power of competence;
- Introducing new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services;
- Freezing Council Tax in England for at least one year, and seeking to freeze it for a further year, in partnership with local authorities;
- Cutting local government inspection and abolishing the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Audit Commission; and
- Encouraging schools to seek academy status which removes local education authority influence.

105 The last of these proposals has now passed into law and any outstanding primary or secondary school can apply for academy status without consultation with parents, pupils or the local education authority. At the time of writing, none of Harrow's schools has chosen to seek academy status.

106 Other changes that have been announced were discussed earlier in this paper including major changes to the way in which the Health Service operates and significant changes to policing, especially outside London.

107 For London, the role of the Mayor and the Greater London Authority (GLA) will become increasingly significant. The Mayor is proposing, and appears likely to succeed, in keeping a range of regional planning and strategy development responsibilities which, elsewhere in the country, are being returned to principal Councils. In seeking to influence the environment in which the Council operates, the focus seems to be shifting from Government Office for London (GOL) to City Hall. As mentioned earlier, London Borough Councils, through London Councils, have reached agreement with the London Mayor and the London Assembly over a range of devolution of power proposals which have been submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration some of which would lead to powers being devolved to borough level. Further discussions are taking place to try to reach agreement over outstanding issues.

108 There are also changes to the policy framework arising from legislation in the last Parliament. The Equality Act strengthens protection, advances equality and simplifies the law. It incorporates key provisions such as the introduction of a new strategic duty to reduce socio-economic inequalities in local communities although it is not yet known when this and other changes included in the Act will be activated. The aim of the equalities duties is that public authorities (including schools) consider diverse needs when designing and delivering public services to achieve fairer opportunities and better public services. The new duty extends the current duties in relation to race, disability and gender to cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy, maternity and paternity, and gender reassignment.

Local policy

Transformation

109 The Better Deal for Residents Programme: Shaping Harrow for the Future was launched in July 2010. This programme sets out how services will be transformed over the

medium term and contribute substantially to the savings targets that the Council will have to meet over the next three years. The programme has three areas of focus:

Being a more efficient and effective organisation that can live within its means

- Enabling staff to work more effectively and productively;
- Reducing levels of administration and overheads; and
- Services realigned to live within our means.

Joining up and personalising customer service for our residents

- Improved customer service and providing more joined up services when residents contact the Council;
- More services provided in collaboration with local partners;
- Personalise services and promote independence giving power to residents to decide what services meet their needs; and
- Online citizen accounts tailored for individuals.

Building on the community spirit of residents to be more involved in the future of their Borough

- Lowest cost channels used to transact with the Council cutting the cost of paper trails;
- Looking after and taking care of the environment; and
- Supporting neighbours, families and friends with needs.

110 The Council is also looking for its Better Deal for Residents Programme to lead to the spatial development and regeneration of the Borough through the development of proposals around property and place shaping. Critically this will include steps to support the regeneration of the Town Centre.

111 The following actions have been agreed as the initial steps for how this vision will be achieved and will be subject to the development of business cases and further consultation.

Being a more efficient and effective organisation that can live within its means.

Enabling staff to work more effectively and productively

112 Council workers will be expected to be more mobile and flexible in how they work and how they use office space. Investment in technology will enable staff to hot desk more effectively, work from home where appropriate and update records without having to come back into the office.

113 Tiers and levels of management will be brought under tighter control so that managers are managing a larger number of people and there are fewer tiers between Corporate Directors and front line staff.

114 The Council will put the very latest technology into the hands of the Public Realm staff which will make our streets even cleaner by more efficient mobile working, tracking, route planning and improving links to our residents. Integration between Access Harrow and the Streets and Grounds Maintenance service will be improved. In addition to these technological solutions, a change management programme will review and revise current working practices and an organisational redesign will also be undertaken to align with new ways of working. The Council will also undertake an exercise to compare the various options for providing services and giving value for money.

Reducing levels of administration and overheads

115 A review of administrative support at the Council will be undertaken with the aim of reducing spend by creating a new hub and spoke model for administrative staff that will also improve the quality of administrative support available.

116 A review will be undertaken to ensure that we improve further the effectiveness of functions such as performance, research and consultation across the Council.

117 In the mid to long term, plans will be developed for a new 21st century Civic Centre that will be able to contribute towards the regeneration of the Town Centre. Plans will be developed with local partners to leverage a new Civic Centre as an opportunity to join up services with local residents.

Services realigned to live within our means

118 Opportunities will be progressed with the West London Alliance of Councils to improve the value for money of home care provider contracts. The West London Councils have been working together to jointly procure home care contracts and to save money, while maintaining standards, through improved negotiation and bulk purchasing.

119 A review of Special Needs Transport will be undertaken which may include the development of travel training and volunteering to support the service.

120 A consultation will be launched on the future levels of funding available to voluntary sector organisations to deliver services on behalf of the Council.

121 A review will be undertaken of the administration of concessionary travel as this is currently disjointed. This will consider the introduction of a single mobility assessment for customers.

122 The Teenage Placements Strategy will examine options for the type of provision presently in place and plans to meet the changing needs of our older Looked After Children.

123 A realignment of children's services will be completed to deliver a new multi agency front desk and redesigned services in support.

124 Property assets that are no longer core to the business of the Council will be decommissioned and disposed of when favourable market conditions are available.

125 The Property and Infrastructure service within Community and Environment was created to take on the complete technical construction and maintenance delivery role for the Council's response to the major levels of capital investment available through the Decent Homes, One School Pathfinder, Post 16, Petts Hill, Transport for London and general Harrow capital programmes. The level of capital works from 2007-9 exceeded £150M. The scale of this work is forecast to decrease significantly, and quickly. All of the programmes are now approaching their end and future short-term capital, whether external or internal, will be severely reduced to the extent that structural change is required. The challenge for Property and Infrastructure over the short to medium term is very different to that of 2 to 3 years ago. Reductions in finance within a project delivery based part of the organisation inevitably results in a need to reduce staffing levels, particularly at a senior management level within the service.

126 The Council will revive plans for combining the central and Civic Centre libraries into a community hub and also seek to create a local history centre at Headstone Manor. Where possible, the Council will develop libraries as community hubs which are open and used longer than at present and by a wider range of people. An overall blueprint proposal for Arts, Libraries and Leisure will be developed.

127 Parking provision by the Council requires continuing evaluation to look at the most efficient ways of service delivery, ways of making it easier for customers to use the service and to pay for parking, for example, through the cashless parking which has successfully been introduced elsewhere in London. There are inequalities in the costs of parking across the borough which needs to be taken into account. Parking income provides the very necessary contribution that funds the wider transport and concessionary transport programmes of the Council. The environmental effects of vehicle movements will play an increasing part of future planning for transportation and parking. The Council will seek to encourage regular turnover of parking spaces in all district centres.

128 A review will be undertaken of the activity and support given by all council departments to fund voluntary and community organisations. This will create difficult choices as the reduction in funds available to the council is reflected in future funding levels to the sector. The Council will seek to reduce its contribution to the London Council's grant scheme. The Council recognises the importance of clarity for the sector during these difficult times. In particular, the Council will consider moving to a competitive commissioning based approach for larger service level agreements which will last for up to four years once awarded. This will mean that, in future, the Council focuses commissioning on those community based services which most closely align with council priorities. The Council will carry out an impact assessment of any proposals and will meet its Compact obligations in terms of consultation before any changes are implemented.

Joining up and personalising customer service for our residents

Improved customer service and providing more joined up services when residents contact the Council

129 Customer contact activity that is not part of Access Harrow will be migrated into Access Harrow. This will be done alongside the development of a new golden numbers strategy. Working on existing technical platforms, this will enable the Council to join up its services to residents when they make contact and resolve multiple service issues through a single contact. There will be further migration of contact onto the internet and a deepening of activity through the Council's contact channels that will allow more queries to be resolved at the first point of contact.

130 Assessment activity that is currently dispersed across the Council will be more effectively coordinated so that there is improved sharing of data and reduced contact to gather data from residents. The Council will use the information it has gathered more effectively to make life easier for families.

131 A Housing Ambition Programme will be delivered with the aim of improving the service so that by 2012 residents believe they have one of the best services in London.

132 A review of Leaseholder services will be completed using Lean process improvement techniques.

133 The Council will look to develop a new 'Commitment to Business' to demonstrate the standards of service that local business can expect to receive from the Council

More Services provided in collaboration with partners

134 A new reablement and intermediate care service will be launched to help adults and older people have the confidence and skills to live independently rather than going back into hospital or going into residential accommodation. It will also reduce the levels of home care that service users need to receive. Reablement services will also be offered where appropriate to potential users of social care services when they first contact the Council.

135 Opportunities will be developed with local partners to join up service delivery locations with the Council that will provide more integrated services to local residents.

136 An analysis of the families with the most complex needs in the Borough will be undertaken to identify opportunities for improved join up of services.

Personalise services and promote independence giving power to residents to decide what services meet their needs

137 Adult services are planning to launch a major consultation with stakeholders in the autumn. This will describe the financial context for the service over the next few years and consider options for delivering a sustainable service. The consultation will be fully inclusive of all stakeholders and designed to ensure all voices are heard. This process will shape the choices which may then need fuller, detailed consultation. The starting point will be a determination from the council to avoid tightening eligibility criteria. Some of the options that will be considered are users' financial contribution for services, entitlement to transport, the future shape of the meals on wheels service. Adults Services will conclude their current work reviewing voluntary sector service level agreements.

138 The Council will continue to roll out personalised budgets to users of Adult care services and to carers.

Improved self serve with online citizen accounts tailored for individuals

139 Online citizen accounts will be developed to give all residents a personalised log in to Council services where they will be able to receive information, check balances and make transactions.

140 Self service will be introduced into all libraries to make it quicker and easier to borrow, renew or return books.

Building on the community spirit of residents to be more involved in the future of their Borough

Lowest cost channels used to transact with the Council cutting the cost of paper trails

141 The Council will make it easier for residents to adopt the lowest cost ways of transacting with the Council, accessing services over the internet and paying by direct debit.

Looking after and taking care of the environment

142 Residents will be given greater opportunities to contribute to an improved environment through improved levels of recycling.

143 Residents will be encouraged to amend their lifestyles in such a way as to improve the environment e.g. by not dropping litter and by being less reliant on car usage.

144 Opportunities for residents to be involved in volunteering to help look after local assets e.g. Harrow's parks and open spaces will be explored

145 Residents will have the opportunity for taking greater levels of neighbourhood responsibility e.g. through Neighbourhood Champions.

146 A new scheme will be launched to encourage housing tenants to take greater levels of responsibility for the condition in which properties are left when they become void.

Supporting neighbours, families and friends with needs

147 The role of local residents in helping look after and support the most vulnerable in society may be developed.

148 Models for supporting Special Needs Transport will be developed which will support more independent travel for current users. Opportunities for alternative models for escorting service users will also be assessed.

Partnership

149 The Sustainable Community Strategy states that "by 2020, Harrow will be recognised for:

- integrated and co-ordinated quality services, many of which focus on preventing problems from arising, especially for vulnerable groups, and all of which put users in control, offering access and choice;
- Environmental, economic and community sustainability, because we actively manage our impact on the environment and have supported inclusive communities which provide the jobs, homes, education, healthcare, transport and other services all citizens need
- Improving the quality of life, by reducing inequalities, empowering the community voice, promoting respect and being the safest borough in London."

150 It is proposed that the Sustainable Community Strategy should be refreshed before the beginning of the next financial year to take account of the changing national policy context, and its implications for Harrow, the new administration's local priorities as well as the completion of the current Local Area Agreement (LAA). While no announcement has been made about the development of new LAAs from 2011 onwards, the Government has abandoned the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) between the HM Treasury and Government Departments on which LAAs were modelled and, therefore, it seems unlikely that there will be another LAA.

Government Inspection/Assessment

151 The Government has already ordered the Audit Commission to stop work on the current year's Comprehensive Area Assessment and have scrapped the Assessment process. It is still not clear whether there will be a replacement for CAA and, if so, what form it would take. The ending of CAA is linked to the principle of devolution of responsibility from Whitehall to local authorities and communities and removes the assessment of local authorities against a nationally determined benchmark. However, it does also make comparing performance and identifying beacon innovation more difficult.

152 It appears that the work of Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission that inspect and support Children's and Adult Social Care services respectively will continue, probably in a modified form. There is no definitive news on the future of the National Indicator Set although there are suggestions that at least, the number of indicators will be reduced.

Conclusions

153 The retreat from inspection and assessment, linked with the promised general power of competence for local authorities, suggests that the policy environment is much more open to local determination than in previous years. This returns power and responsibility to local authorities for setting priorities, standards and outcomes, although with reduced resources to enable needs and aspirations to be met. In turn, this places a greater emphasis on understanding current and emerging local needs and aspirations to assist in framing a coherent direction for Harrow Council.

154 The Council has to continue to deliver services and perform to high standards while undertaking a far-reaching transformation programme and making very substantial savings on top of those made over the last four years. To help it focus on the issues that really matter in this context, it will need a vision and corporate priorities that, together, build into a narrative describing what the Council is for, what it wants to be famous for and how it should be judged.

Next Steps

155 This paper sets out where the Council was at the end of the last financial year and identifies, as far as possible, what is likely to significantly affect how it goes forward over the next four years. It is intended to help Members focus on setting a vision for the Council, concentrate on the Council's core purposes and determine a small number of strategic and service priorities to shape the planning of services over the coming years.