

CABINET

THURSDAY 7 APRIL 2011

PUBLIC AND COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Cabinet – 7 April 2011

Agenda Item 5

The following questions (except for Q2, where a written response was promised) were not reached in the time limit of 15 minutes. It was noted that written responses would be provided and appended to the minutes.

2.

Questioner: Councillor William Stoodley

Asked of: Councillor Phillip O'Dell, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety

Question "Following on from my previous question, I have also received vehement complaints from shopkeepers about the camera at the quadrant by the "Good Will to All" pub and the double yellow lines along the Pinner Road that were instigated by the previous Conservative administration. We cannot possibly expect our local businesses to prosper if their trade and growth is stifled and smothered by double yellow lines being plonked right outside their shopfronts. It is not unreasonable for shopkeepers to expect their customers to be able to park for a mere 5 or 10 minutes outside of a shop; can the portfolio holder clarify whether or not any action is being proposed with respect to this serious problem for shopkeepers, both in the borough generally and in the two areas I have mentioned in particular?"

Answer: In relation to the Goodwill Junction, a scheme to introduce pay and display parking has been agreed close to the junction in Headstone Drive in order to improve access to parking for local shops. This is being implemented currently and will become operational in May. The scheme is supported by local traders and members.

For Pinner Road CPZ, a business survey is being undertaken by the Council in this area in advance of a review of the parking controls. The review will take place early in 2011/12 and has been included in the work programme following TARSAP's recommendation in February.

11.

Questioner: Councillor Kam Chana

Asked of: Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts

Question: "What are the full costs (broken down by all cost centres and expenditure lines of the contract) of extending for another 9

months the contract with Enterprisemouchel to provide Public Realm Infrastructure services?”

Answer: The anticipated expenditure with Enterprisemouchel in the period up to 31/3/12 is:

Revenue			
Cost centre	Activity	Description	Spend £k
1239	HW Maintenance	Carriageway repairs, channel sealing, patching	220
6715	Bridge/HW Structure Mntce	Annual maintenance of various highway structures (bridges, culverts, etc)	75
7267	Drainage Infrastructure Mntce	Annual maintenance of watercourses, gully cleaning, highway drainage	215
8280	Vehicle Crossings	Construction of vehicle crossovers for residents and businesses	150
8692	Emergency Services / Responsive Mntce	High priority responsive maintenance of footways & carriageways, highway emergencies, patching, potholes, road lining, street nameplates	1150
9051	Lighting Maintenance	Annual maintenance programme, including reactive repairs, planned column maintenance, clean & change, illuminated signs and night scouting	480
9255	Winter Service (Gritting etc).	Providing the winter maintenance service, including gritting and standby & delivery of salt to other premises	200
8514	Traffic Management	Minor traffic related works, e.g. signs and lining.	15
Capital			
	Highways Improvements	Essential improvements to carriageways & footways at 49 locations	2750
	Public Lighting	Replacement of dangerous concrete columns in 13 roads	650
	Drainage	12 projects to alleviate flooding risk to over	200

	Improvements	2,7900 properties	
	CPZ's & Car Parking	Implementation of approved CPZ programme and Problem Streets initiative	50
	TfL Programme	Delivery of various traffic and safety-related projects providing improvements for highway users	1250
		TOTAL	7405

12.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation

Question: "Do you believe that Harrow Council currently receives good value for money from the Local Government Association, given that we have now passed the deadline for withdrawing next year and would therefore not be able to do as such until 2013?"

Answer: The LGA have taken account of the current challenges facing local government and have indicated a commitment to providing sharper and more focussed services for members with a reduced standard subscription. The fee of £43,553 (excluding VAT) compares with £50,040 in 2010/11 and £62,516 in 2009/10.

The Local Government Group, which the LGA is part of, are facing a tough financial settlement themselves, with a 38% reduction in their own central government grant which is leading them to make savings in their staffing of 45%.over the next 4 years. They are therefore reducing their fees to members whilst extending the package of benefits offered to member councils such as Harrow.

Given the very challenging settlement for local government in the Comprehensive Spending Review I believe that it is vitally important that local government has a strong voice to feed into central government setting out the real challenges we face whilst also proposing how less central government interference will enable councils to deliver more effective services to our residents. Successes in the last year from LGA influence have been securing extra money for fixing damage to roads caused by last years' harsh winter (which will result in extra resources to Harrow of over £250,000) and supporting the view of greater devolution to local authorities, some of which have been set out in the Localism Bill.

I believe that the need to have a collective local government voice has never been more important, and that it therefore makes sense to remain an LGA member and to work with them to give voice at a national level to the issues which matter to our residents. With their improved offer and reduced subscription I therefore think we are receiving value for money for our membership.

13.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation

Question: “At March’s Council meeting, you rejected a Motion put forward by our party to consider urgently the Council’s membership of the LGA, instead promising a review of all similar organisations to which the Council is affiliated. Can you provide an update on the progress of this review and inform us as to which Members and officers are or will be involved?”

Answer: This review has not yet commenced. As we will all be aware, there are many challenges ahead, especially given the incredibly difficult financial settlement we received from the Coalition Government last year. I remain committed to completing this review over the coming months, and involving the appropriate Members and officers in doing so. However, I believe that our residents would expect the capacity of Councillors and officers to be prioritised looking at the best way to improve our services whilst at the same time considering the significant level of savings we have to make. This must be a more valuable use of our time in the current climate.

14.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation

Question: “Would the Leader agree with me that on the issue of Academies, the Council has a duty to ensure that any information provided to the public, parents, pupils and any other interested or relevant parties is accurate, politically neutral and not misleading – whether by intention or not?”

Answer: We are grateful to our schools for seeking to expand the consultations beyond the statutory requirements. The responsibility on how much consultation and with whom, lies with Governing Bodies. The Local Authority's role in these

consultations is to ensure that all stakeholders are fully informed of the pros and cons of converting to academy status. Harrow Council has sought to encourage a widespread understanding of issues with a civic debate, working with schools seeking academy status. Concern about any perceived bias is a question of interpretation and certainly not any attempt to influence a decision one way or the other. I am confident that all publications from Harrow Council are fair, and balanced.

15.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation

Question: “Is the Leader happy with the debate over Academies and the future of schools in Harrow?”

Answer: As indicated in my previous answer I am pleased to see the people of Harrow debating issues and I hope contributing to an important consultation process. I have seen the Council operating at its best - for example, the Harrow Youth Parliament debate suggests that the future of local democracy is in good hands, and the two sessions with governors of all schools in the Borough wanting to understand and be involved in the process. To the extent that Harrow Council has played a small role in facilitating that debate and encouraging voices to be heard in the consultation process, I am satisfied that we have discharged our responsibility as community leaders. The consultation period is now over and we await the decisions of the Governing Bodies.