

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

COUNCIL MEETING

14 APRIL 2011

PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM 6)

A period of up to 15 minutes is allowed for the asking of written questions by members of the public of a Member of the Executive, or the Chairman of any Committee.

1.

Questioner: Terry Revill, Flash Musicals

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

Question: “Can you explain why Harrow Council has not committed to adding the £300,000 due to be returned by London Grants to the Grants pot?”

Answer: For many years now we have been campaigning to cut the large contributions which we have to pay to London Council’s grants scheme. Very few of the bodies which receive grants for this scheme directly provide services to Harrow residents. This year there has been a consensus to cut the funding to this scheme by 50%, which would mean a cut in our contribution of about £357,000 and this has been allowed from the budget.

However, following a judicial review, this had to be put on hold whilst London Councils consult again and ensure that we carry out a rigorous equality impact assessment, as the Judge has ordered us to do. London Councils is confident that having done this and taking account of any changes which may need to be made when we make these impact assessments, we will eventually receive our rebate.

I am sure you will be aware, the Council has to reduce its spending by nearly 30% over the next four years and the original proposal that was received for the grants budget was for it to be cut by the same amount. Rebate from the London Councils is not ring fenced. In my view the amount we give to London Councils is far too much, and I do not think it should be ring fenced. We have to take account of all the other financial pressures which we are under. However, we have taken account of our rebate and instead of

cutting the grants budget by 30%, we cut it by 15% and we are still providing nearly £600,000 in the grants budget.

As I indicated to you in my reply to a question from you at the Cabinet, many other London councils who were in exactly the same position in terms of their rebates, have not been nearly as generous.

I still think we are paying too much to London Councils grants scheme and I will continue to lobby for a much smaller contribution and bigger rebate to ourselves.

2.

Questioner: Ann Freeman

Asked of: Councillor Margaret Davine (Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing)

Question “How did it happen that Harrow Council's own Quality Assessment Framework and other safeguards failed to protect from neglect and failed to allow people to flourish in the 3 houses that they own at 15 Greenhill Road, 777 Field End Road and 6 Weldon Crescent, and managed through Harrow's Supporting People and Harrow Adult Mental Health Services Care Programme Approach policies?”

Answer: Thank you for raising your concerns about the three properties you mention. I share those concerns, especially about the condition, maintenance, lack of cleanliness and health and safety issues in one of the properties.

The services that are provided at these sites are for people with Mental Health needs that have been commissioned by the Supporting People team and until recently were provided by CNWL.

The housing related support services delivered to the properties were monitored using the Quality Assurance Framework since 2004. The reason for the Supporting People team re-procuring the support service recently and resulting in the Richmond Fellowship having taking over the contract from April 2011 was because concerns had been identified through feedback from service users and carers. They had highlighted concerns about the quality and the standards. My hope is that now that Richmond Fellowship have taken over, the situation will be much better in the future.

Supplemental Question: Richmond Fellowship is only part of the care. What about Harrow Mental Health Services' input?

Supplemental Answer: The care for care and health related needs will be continued by CNWL which is, as you know because you helped monitor through the Section 75 agreement, and that will continue.