

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

### CABINET – 19 JANUARY 2012

#### Minute 346 (Agenda Item 5, Councillor Questions 7 and 8-17)

*The following questions were not reached in the time limit of 15 minutes. The following written responses were provided.*

Q7.

**Questioner:** Councillor Paul Osborn

**Asked of:** Councillor David Perry, Portfolio Holder for Community and Cultural Services

**Question:** “According to the Cultural Services report, renovation work on Headstone Manor was estimated to cost £700,000 to £900,000 in 2008. Is this estimate still sound, or are there plans to reassess before applying for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund?”

**Written Answer:** Any application to the Heritage Lottery Fund would require a full conservation management plan and a full cost appraisal. The estimated costs were for essential repairs to bring Headstone Manor back into use. Any application will look at the overall use of the site as a Heritage Centre. A further report will be brought before Cabinet in June before application submission.

Qs 8 - 17

**Questioner:** Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

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

**Question:** “The paper that went to December’s Cabinet showed that by not tendering for a new highways maintenance contract immediately after your administration’s election in 2010, the Council missed out on saving £700,000 by virtue of needing to extend the existing contract with Mouchel. As Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business Transformation, what services would you invest in and/or what cuts wouldn’t you be making if you had an additional £700,000 in your budget?”

The ten Portfolio Holders have agreed to make a joint response to Councillor questions 8 to 17. All of us condemn the childish waste of time involved and the abuse, once again, of Councillor Question Time by this particular Councillor. It is not what we expect from a senior member of the Opposition. Unfortunately, it is what we unfortunately have to get used to.

In response to the question we would firstly like to point out that on taking office we found that the management of the procurement of major contracts was in an absolute shambles. For example, there was not even a central contracts register let alone a calendar of end dates for contracts. By the vigorous and decisive action by our Portfolio Holder for Major Contracts that position has been now been remedied and we have a system truly fit for purpose.

On coming to power we found that there was a report from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) in 2009 recommending that significant savings could be made by better procurement in all areas including major contracts. The previous Administration failed to act on this report and by doing lost the Council and so Council Tax payers millions of pounds. Once again this Administration has taken firm and decisive action to improve our procurement which will be saving us £2 million a year over the next three years. We now have a pro-active system for our major contracts which is already yielding excellent results, for example, with the savings on the GLL contract for leisure services and we are also making in-year savings in other contracts as well as major savings on low cost procurement. The previous Administration ignored the PWC Report and failed to do anything at all about getting savings from procurement and indeed scoffed at what we were doing in this area. If only they had taken note, then the Council would be literally millions of pounds better off. Councillor Macleod-Cullinane may want to ponder how we might have used those squandered millions of pounds of savings to defend front line services. We are not holding our breath.

We further totally reject the statement implicit in the question about missing out on £700k savings. The question implies that the saving of £700,000 identified in the December Cabinet report could have been obtained in 2010. However, this assumption is, of course, naïve, ignorant and simplistic as it totally fails take account of the major change which has taken place in the market conditions, which have moved substantially in the Council's favour in the intervening period. We believe we got the timing spot on and that our judgment has been proved to be right. The missed £700k is a delusion in the questioner's mind set.

The question, therefore, of what the non-existent saving could have been spent on is irrelevant as it is based on a totally false premise.