

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

### CABINET – 20 JUNE 2012

#### REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 JUNE 2012

##### Strategic Future of Leisure and Libraries Provision - Outcomes

<b>Chairman:</b>	* Councillor Jerry Miles	
<b>Councillors:</b>	* Sue Anderson * Ann Gate * Krishna James Zarina Khalid	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane * Chris Mote (1) * Paul Osborn * Stephen Wright
<b>Voting Co-opted:</b>	(Voluntary Aided) † Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) Mrs A Khan
<b>In attendance: (Councillors)</b>	Christine Bednell Keith Ferry	Minute 280 Minute 279

- \* Denotes Member present
- (1) Denote category of Reserve Members
- † Denotes apologies received

#### 282. Strategic Future of Leisure and Libraries Provision - Outcomes

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Divisional Director of Community and Culture on the work conducted so far for the potential commissioning of library and leisure management services in partnership with Brent (leisure) and Ealing (libraries and leisure). The Divisional Director advised that due to the dates of this Committee and Cabinet, her formal report had not been available to circulate for this meeting, however, the public Cabinet report for 20 June had been published that day. The Divisional Director alerted Members that, if Cabinet gave approval for the proposals to go to tender, a further report would be submitted to Cabinet with the outcome and recommendations in December.

Following the Divisional Director's update, Members asked questions and made comments as which included:

- Clarification on the vision for libraries in Harrow was required. There was a need to be clear as to what was required from a service and it may be cheaper to use vouchers than to provide a library service. The Divisional Director advised that there was a detailed draft specification, a clear vision and that the development of libraries as a community hub was key. Libraries were being modernised and the Council was looking at innovation, deliverability and sustainability. There was a statutory obligation to have a library service.
- A Member questioned the driving force behind the change and was advised that there was a need to make efficiencies – the Medium Term Financial Strategy set a savings target of £200,000. There could be difficult choices for Members but the current proposals were an interesting and innovative way to develop the service.
- In response to a question about whether there would be any further reductions in the levels of staffing in libraries, Members were advised that this would be a matter for the contractor if the service were commissioned and staff were TUPE'd across but that it would remain the Council's, rather than the contractor's, responsibility to make strategic decisions such as whether to keep libraries open or whether to refurbish its library buildings .
- A Member indicated that he had significant concerns about the proposals and stated that, in his view, there was a lack of detail. He questioned the level of flexibility to be included in the tender and the role of scrutiny and Members in the invitation to tender process. There did not appear to have been consultation with Members. The Divisional Director advised that the specifications were available and that Portfolio Holders had been briefed and given a full set of the draft specifications and draft contract.
- The results of the Let's Talk consultation had indicated that residents did not want the libraries to be outsourced to anyone other than the Council. The Divisional Director acknowledged this but advised that the proposal was that the management of the libraries be commissioned but that the Council would retain sovereignty over its library service and would continue to drive the strategic vision for the service. The alternatives, given the current financial imperatives, could be even more unpalatable for Members and residents.
- Cabinet needed all the relevant information in order to come to a decision, including evidence. The Divisional Director advised that background documents were available to view in the Members' Library.

Members expressed concern at the method of consultation and suggested that there be a challenge panel to review the specifications prior to going out to tender in order to engage Members in the process.

The Chair thanked the Divisional Director for her attendance and responses and it was

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) a scrutiny challenge panel be established to consider the contract specifications in July;
- (2) the comments be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

### Background Documents:

Report submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2012

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12 June 2012

### Contact Officer:

Alison Atherton, Senior Professional Democratic Services

Tel: 020 8424 1266

Email: [alison.atherton@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:alison.atherton@harrow.gov.uk)