

COUNCIL (COUNCIL TAX)

THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2018

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS WRITTEN RESPONSES

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LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

COUNCIL MEETING

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22 FEBRUARY 2018

QUESTION WITH NOTICE

A period of up to 15 minutes is allowed for the asking of written questions by Members of Council or a Member of the Executive or the Chair of any Committee.

Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Glen Hearnden, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Employment

Question 1:

“Can you detail the structure of properties before and after the regeneration of Grange Farm?”

Answer:

The number and type of properties on the Grange Farm estate at the moment is as follows:

- There are 282 homes on the existing Grange Farm estate.
- There are 29 leasehold/freehold properties in a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom flats and bungalows.
- There are 233 council homes, of which 93 are 1 bed flats and 140 are 2 bed flats/bungalows.
- There are 20 housing association homes of which 6 are 1 bed flats, 6 are 2 bed flats and 8 are 3 bed houses.

The planning application proposes 574 new homes.

- 216 are for social rent of which 75 are 1 bed flats, 95 are 2 bed flats, 16 are 2 bed duplexes, 8 are 3 bed flats, 8 are 3 bed houses and 8 are 4 bed houses.
- 25 are for shared ownership of which 13 are 1 bed flats and 12 are 2 bed flats.
- 333 are for private sale of which 131 are 1 bed flats, 162 are 2 bed flats, 23 are 2 bed duplexes, 13 are 3 bed flats, 2 are 3 bed houses and 2 are 4 bed houses.

The planning application is a hybrid application for which there is a detailed planning application for Phase 1 which provides 89 affordable homes in total.

- 68 of these are for social rent of which 19 are 1 bed flats, 45 are 2 bed flats/duplexes and 4 are 3 bed houses.

- 21 are for shared ownership of which 10 are 1 bed flats and 11 are 2 bed flats.

10% of all new homes (social rent, shared ownership and private sale) will be built to wheelchair standard. The social rent homes will be wheelchair adapted ready for a wheelchair user to move in.

Phase 2 and 3 comprising the remainder of the site is an outline planning application and the final detail and mix of the homes to be provided will be subject to further applications.

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Questioner: Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution)

Question 2:

“At February’s Cabinet meeting you said a Chief Executive is a “front-line” position. Can you outline the “front-line” tasks that you’d expect a Chief Executive to perform?”

Answer:

I expect the Chief Executive, supported by a strong management team to take responsibility for delivery of all of our front line services. I don’t expect them on a daily basis to answer the phones in the contact centre, make Housing Benefits assessments or to load our Refuse vehicles .So, what do I expect?

I expect them to work with Councillors through meetings when we set the budget, to advise on those services and how they are resourced. I expect them to make sure they deliver value for money in our front line services and to make sure they are performing in line with my expectations. Our services have had to change dramatically in the last few years in response to funding cuts and changes in the market and changes in the needs of our service users. I expect them to lead this change, deliver innovation and modernise – lead with me the future planning for this Local Authority.

I expect them to make sure they have effective support in place for those front line services to be effective – HR support, ICT, Procurement, Legal support to

name a few. They need to make sure health and safety is effective, that information is secure.

The Chief Executive works with a senior management team and not alone. From all of them, I expect our front line staff to be well managed, well trained and motivated when they come to work. I expect them to be good leaders. They need to be with their staff, visible to the front line, knowing what's happening on the front line. Doing what is required to make sure it works on the front line.

Higher morale brings higher performance to our residents.

And our front line services need to reflect the needs of our amazingly diverse community.

I expect them to work in partnership locally. So the Chief Executive will be working with the borough commander on the implementation of the BCU in Harrow. That's front line. It's about making sure Harrow is properly policed. He has already been to Northwick Park to talk to his counterpart there about whether we could be doing more together. He is supporting West London on the STP to make help redesign services to relieve the pressure points on A&E - that's front line.

So I expect a Chief Executive to build and lead a team to make sure our front line services meet the diverse needs of our residents. I expect good leaders – visible to their staff, present in Harrow, working for residents.

In my experience, that's what he and his team do, and that's a vital front line service.

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Questioner: Councillor Paul Osborn

Asked of: Councillor Sachin Shah (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution)

Question 3:

“Why have you pushed the budget gap to the next two years, is it because you are not confident that you will still be Leader then?”

Answer:

The budget gap has not been pushed back. Over the 6 year period 2015/16 to 2020/21, it is estimated that the Council has to fund an estimate £125m budget gap to balance its books.

The Council has taken a responsible attitude to address the financial challenges by setting a three year MTFS. In 2016/17, for the first time, the administration proposed a three year budget covering the period 2016/17 to 2018/19 to show its commitment to achieving financial sustainability through a period of unprecedented Government cuts.

But the council works in an ever changing environment and managing a balanced three budget alongside continued demand pressures, which are not funded, is getting increasingly difficult leading to challenges around maintaining a long term balanced position. In 2016/17 growth of £3m was invested into homelessness and adults social care. In 2017/18 a further £7.5m was invested into social care and £2m into homelessness. In the 2018/19 budget further growth of £8.7m has been invested in front line social care.

The 2018/19 budget process has seen a number of de-risking adjustments to the MTFS but this enables us to be clear and transparent about the challenges facing the Council and the level of actions needed. It also puts us

on a good footing to manage a balanced budget in 2018/19 which we have proved we can do by tightly managing the budget in 2017/18 to provide an underspend to assist with future year budget pressures.

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Questioner: Councillor Richard Almond

Asked of: Councillor Christine Robson (Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools)

Question 4:

“At the February Cabinet meeting you said as Portfolio Holder you can handle everything except the financial aspect of the role. Has it taken several drastically overspent budgets for you to realise this?”

Answer:

Councillor Almond, to correct your assertion, I did not say that. Rather what I said was that your understanding of the issue is very restricted. You seem to be incapable of understanding that we have taken and will continue to take a responsible and prudent approach to the problem of providing services in the face of cuts.

You have a very narrow view of the world , conveniently pushing to one side the pressures on this Local Authority of huge, continuing and punishing cuts in Government Funding, with as you may by now have managed to remember, 97% of cuts in funding over 7 years.

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Question 5:

“Please could you outline how your administration has engaged with the Harrow Youth Parliament and treated their members with respect?”

Answer:

I believe we are treating the Harrow Youth Parliament members with respect and we have engaged with them on numerous occasions, setting up monthly meetings with them, answering numerous questions at Cabinet and Council meetings, and working collaboratively on projects such as the Life Chances Bid and Harrow Horizons. I along with you will attend their conference in late February.