

COUNCIL QUESTIONS – 23 FEBRUARY 2004:

ORAL QUESTIONS

Oral Question 1 – To the Executive Member for Finance from Councillor Haley

Now the budget for this year has been finalised, could the Executive Member give me a summation of the general state of Haringey's finances?

Oral Question 2 - To the Leader of the Council from Councillor Gilbert

Why he rejected the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny committee to make cost savings in the Council's communication function?

Oral Question 3 - To the Leader of the Council from Councillor Reynolds

Could the Leader of the Council explain to me what effects being on the 'floor level' has had on Haringey, in terms of recent Revenue Support Grant settlements?

Oral Question 4 – To the Executive Member for Environment from Councillor Oatway

What is the cost of the Community Clear Up Scheme and what quantity of rubbish has been cleared as a result?

Oral Question 5 - To the Leader of the Council from Councillor Wynne

Could the Leader make a commitment to Council that in any future lobbying of government related to local government funding, the needs of the elderly are a paramount issue in those discussions?

Oral Question 6 - To the Leader of the Council from Councillor Aitken

Which members of the Council are also Non-Executive Directors or Chairs of NHS Trusts and what benefits or remuneration do they receive?

Oral Question 7 - To the Executive Member for Organisational Development and Performance Management from Councillor Bull

Will the Executive Member for Organisational Development and Performance Management join me in welcoming the Audit Commission's decision to scale back on its audit and inspection work linked to the performance of councils? Furthermore, will he give a commitment that this will not be seen as a green light to pull back from our commitment to ensure that Haringey is a high performing borough?

Oral Question 8 – To the Executive Member for Environment from Councillor Bloch

What plans does he have for calming traffic on Priory Road?

Oral Question 9 - To the Executive Member for Finance from Councillor Dobbie

Will Cllr Adje inform me as to what the priorities were for Haringey Council in the setting of this year's budget?

Oral Question 10 – To the Executive Member for Environment from Councillor Hare

If he will make a statement about the recent Report from the English Regions Cycling Development Team which said that there is a lack of political leadership in Haringey with regard to the development of cycling routes and that previous good work is being undermined by lack of resources?

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Written Question 1- To the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Hoban

How many people requiring temporary accommodation were transferred to Haringey from other boroughs in each of the last 5 years and what percentage of those transfers into Haringey temporary accommodation have continued to be funded by the transferring boroughs?

Answer

I am assuming the question refers to the placement of homeless households by other local authorities in temporary private sector accommodation that they have procured in Haringey.

Funding

All such accommodation would be funded by the placing authority, which would have accepted a duty under Part III of the Housing Act 1996. The placing authority would normally be responsible for the permanent housing of the family.

Numbers of Homeless Placements

It is only possible to give a rough idea of the numbers involved. Although L.A's are obliged to send a notification to host boroughs when they make a homeless placement there is no way of checking accuracy or of knowing of a placement if a notification hasn't been sent. The system has broken down in recent years and has fallen into disuse pending the development of the Notify system (see below). As no notification was sent when a household moved away such notifications did not form a reliable basis for counting numbers of properties in use.

The Association of London Government does collect statistics on out of borough homeless placements, but only occasionally issues a summary. They have been asked to provide an up to date summary recently but have said the information they hold is very unreliable due to a poor and possibly inaccurate response from L.A.'s.

Information that has been provided by the ALG shows total homeless placements in Haringey by other LA's:

March 2001 763

Sept 2002 1082

Aug 2003 834 (although we are warned that this figure is likely to be inaccurate)

Detailed information was last provided in 2002 but it is inaccurate, as the return has no information for Barnet, Islington or Newham, which were known to have substantial nos. of placements

Number of households in Haringey placed in hotel annexes and private rented sector property by Homeless Persons Units

Placing borough	Type	March02	Sept01
Barnet	annexe	-	153
Brent	annexe	5	9
Camden	annexe	159	94
Camden	PRS	0	1
Corporation	annexe	4	4
Enfield	annexe	46	52
Hackney	annexe	18	29
Harrow	annexe	1	3
Islington	annexe	-	85
Kensington	annexe	117	62
Lambeth	annexe	2	10
Merton	annexe	0	6
Newham	annexe	-	38
Newham	PRS	-	2
Richmond	annexe	-	2
Richmond	PRS	-	2
Sutton	annexe	2	0
Tower Hamlets	annexe	91	89
Tower Hamlets	PRS	8	6
Waltham Forest	annexe	40	40
Westminster	annexe	0	10
		493	697

Haringey also makes placements in other London boroughs, principally Enfield, and in the West Midlands. The number of external placements has always been less than the number of incoming ones:

Date	In London	Outside London	Total o/s Haringey
Sept 01	237	122	359
Mar 02	281	113	394
Mar 03	232	151	383

Inter-Borough Agreement

The new Inter-borough Agreement on out of Borough Homeless Placements has come into effect from this month. Under this other LA's are capped at the current level of placements and the ALG is currently compiling figures. We are also contacting all known placing boroughs for updated lists. It is likely that LA's will respond with this information under the terms of the Agreement. So far we have heard from Camden with 315 and Islington with 125 placements.

Notify

The ALG Notify project will provide a computerised notification system covering all London boroughs. This will be rolled out over the next few months, with Haringey as the first borough to start

participating. When the system is completely rolled out we should at last be able to properly record all new homeless placements in Haringey (and record when they leave).

Asylum Placements

It should be noted that there have been a considerable number of further placements in Haringey of asylum seekers, both by other LA's Asylum Teams and by the Home Office.

Written Question 2- To the Executive Member for Organisational Development and Performance Management from Cllr Aitken

If he will provide a breakdown of the costs to the Council in the case at the High Court of Justice, D versus London Borough of Haringey? What Budget head were these costs paid out of?

Answer

As Cllr Aitken question relates to the affairs of an individual. I am providing the answer to him separately on a confidential basis.

Written Question 3 to the Executive Member for Environment from Cllr Davies

If he expects to be refunding those residents in managed blocks of flats who are paying twice for their rubbish collection - through council tax and through direct charges from owners - due to the Council's apparent inability to negotiate a waste collection contract which covers all council tax-paying Haringey residents?

Answer-

The cost of scheduled household waste collection from all residences in Haringey is recovered through council tax. No additional charges are made by the Council for scheduled household waste collections. The Waste Management and Transport Contract with Haringey Accord Ltd covers the scheduled collection of household waste from all council tax-paying residents in Haringey.

For some blocks of flats, private management companies or social landlords have arranged for the hire of bulk refuse containers for use by residents. This charge does not include any contribution to the cost of household waste collection and therefore it is not necessary to offer any refund.

Written Question 4 to the Executive Member for Environment from Cllr Featherstone

If he will list the sites of all the billboard posters currently, previously or planned to be used for the Better Haringey campaign along with the reasons for their selection.

Answer

The billboard sites that we are currently using for the Better Haringey campaign are as follows:

- (i) Corner of Tottenham Lane and Ferme Park Road
- (ii) West Green Road (near the junction with Tottenham High Road)
- (iii) Outside Finsbury Park tube/bus station

No other billboards have been used previously and there are as yet no plans to use different sites.

They were selected because they were the ones that were available that achieved the best possible borough coverage.

Written Question 5 to the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Beacham

Could he provide details of expenditure totalling £1.5m due to be transferred from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund for the budget year 2004/2005? And could he provide justification for the proposed transfer of expenditure?

Answer

£1.5m has been provided, as a credit contingency item in the HRA with a corresponding provision in the General Fund. It is an estimate of the net value of costs that may transfer from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund as a result of the current review of inter-fund issues. The work is complex and will not be completed until the spring. The actual impact will not be finalised until the review is complete, but an initial view of some of the inter-fund items has enabled this estimate figure to be introduced at the budget planning stage for this year.

This is part of what I call "good housekeeping", i.e. it is good practice to review every now and then existing arrangements in the light of changing circumstances and to make the necessary adjustments, ensuring fairness and that we are always up to date with all relevant regulations.

Written Question 6 to the Executive Member for Environment from Cllr Hare

Does he welcome the additional 19400 housing units to be built in Haringey by 2016 as proposed by the Mayor's London Plan?

Answer:

Introduction

The London Plan, published on 10 February 2004, is only the second plan for Greater London that has ever been produced. It ends twenty years in which there has been no comprehensive strategic plan for the capital. It is based on the Mayor's vision for an exemplary sustainable world city. The

theme of sustainable improvement to the quality of life, for all who live and work in London, runs throughout the plan. It is also the first of a new generation of plans that aim to integrate the policies of a range of partners – it is the first “Spatial Development Strategy” to be published in England.

In relation to housing the main messages of the London Plan is

□ London is set to grow dramatically – by 800,000 people up to 2016. That is the equivalent of the new Wembley stadium filled to capacity nine times over. London’s total population is projected to rise to 8.1 million by 2016.

□ Up to 33,000 new homes a year are needed to accommodate the increased population and to deal with the backlog of sub-standard housing. The plan allocates targets to boroughs to achieve at least 23,000 a year up to 2006.

Growth is to be focussed in the early years of the plan in defined Opportunity Areas (e.g. Tottenham Hale) and Areas for Intensification (e.g. Haringey Heartland) as well as existing Town Centres throughout London where there is capacity on the public transport network.

The London Plan states that Haringey’s housing target for the period 1997-2016 is to provide additional 19,000 homes. The housing target was a result of a London wide housing capacity study. The Council has contested this figure and carried out their own internal housing study where it was felt that approximately, an additional 11,500 homes could be accommodated in the borough.

The Council gave evidence at the Examination in Public into the draft London Plan stating that this figure for Haringey was unrealistic and unachievable. The Inspectors report from the Examination in Public stated that:

“the housing capacity study no longer provides a reliable measure of the capacity for providing new housing in London over the period to 2016, or an appropriate set of 15-year targets for Boroughs. The need for a new study is accepted by all sides, and we note that the Mayor is committed to an early review of housing capacity on a consistent and co-ordinated basis. As noted in draft Plan paragraph 3A.13, the new study is envisaged to be completed within 3 years and the 23,000 annual target will be reviewed by 2006. In the meantime, neither we nor anybody else is in a position to make ad hoc changes to the figures derived from the existing HCS. To attempt this would risk compounding the inconsistencies and methodological problems noted above”.

The Council has been in negotiation with the GLA regarding the disputed housing numbers to ensure that Haringey’s position is recognised, whilst

the London Plan housing target has not changed, it is widely accepted by all parties concerned that the figure for Haringey is unrealistic.

A new housing capacity figure for Haringey

The GLA will carry out a new housing capacity study in conjunction with all the London Boroughs. The study is due to start in May – June 2004 and should be completed by 2006. The figures from this study will replace the housing targets for boroughs that are set out in the London Plan. The new housing study involves using a new methodology in order to ensure that there is more certainty over the results. Haringey Council is taking part in a pilot housing study to test the new methodology, the pilot study should be completed by June / July 2004. However, the results of the pilot will not change the figures in the London Plan, as these will not change until the capacity study for the whole of London is complete.

Housing need in Haringey

Haringey, in keeping with London as a whole, will require sufficient good quality homes for workers to support growth and economic well being in the borough and the capital.

Headlines from Haringey's housing needs survey, completed in 2002 include:

- an estimated 31% of households are living in unsuitable housing, with disrepair and unfitness as major problems
- many of the problems associated with unsuitable housing can be solved through in-situ solutions but around 7,500 households would need to move if their needs are to be met
- single parents and people from black and minority ethnic communities are more likely to be in housing need
- problems associated with unsuitable housing are spread across the social and private sector.

The survey concluded that in the period to 2006, a total of 24,237 homes would be needed to meet demand from households, including newly forming households and those living in unsuitable housing in the borough.

Within this total 4,112 units of housing are required for owner occupation, 370 units for private renting and 19,755 units of affordable housing for households unable to afford housing at market costs. Affordable housing includes intermediate and key worker housing and low cost home ownership, as well as housing for social renting.

It is clear that this demand cannot be met within the borough's boundaries and officers are working closely with colleagues in neighbouring boroughs to look for housing solutions beyond Haringey and the north London sub-region.

Meeting the Housing Target

The Council is required to contribute towards meeting the housing target for London, and how well we are able to do so is monitored by the Government. The Council aims to meet the housing target by identifying housing sites within the borough and promoting planning policies that encourage housing such as higher density developments and reduced car parking requirements. The Council has already identified a number of proposed sites for housing in the draft Unitary Development Plan.

In order to maximise the availability of affordable housing; the borough is currently consulting on targets within the UDP, which will seek to achieve 50% affordable housing on new developments across the borough. In order to support our work on narrowing the gap between the east and west of Haringey differential targets are proposed, with 70% of affordable housing on developments in the west to be for social rent and 30% intermediate housing. In the east of the borough this split is to be reversed in order to support the location of more economically active households in the east.

Implications for the Borough

The housing target figures would lead to increased pressure on other land uses in the borough e.g. open space, employment land etc. In addition there are implications for education, health and community facilities, transportation etc. The UDP includes policies to protect open space and employment land. Sites for schools and new health facilities have been identified in the draft UDP.

Next steps

The Council will continue to work with Government Office for London (GOL), the Mayor, LDA, TFL and other key stakeholders to ensure that the anticipated growth does not have an adverse impact on the quality of life for Haringey's residents.

Written Question 7 to the Executive Member for Environment from Cllr Gilbert

Could he chronologically outline all the steps and actions Council officers have taken with respect of 53 to 55 Queens Avenue since September 2002?

Answer-

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS 53-55 QUEENS AVENUE, N10

07.05.02 Planning permission granted for conversion to 10 self-contained flats with porter's accommodation. (hgy/2002/0173)

09.08.02 Building regulations approved for 11 flats.

24.12.02 Planning permission granted for 2 additional rooms and gymnasium amendment to planning permission hgy/2002/0173.(hgy/2002/1660)

01.04.03 Planning permission granted for change of use of to hotel, incorporating alterations to rear elevation to provide basement. (hgy/2002/1731)

**16.05.03 The above permission (1.04.03) was amended to allow for an additional basement area
And alteration to the rear elevation including demolition of part of the ground floor rear elevation including demolition of part of the ground floor rear addition and rebuilding to match existing**

01.05.03 –

01.07.03 Site inspections carried out by Building Control.

14.09.03 Planning permission granted for variation to planning permission (hgy/2003/1731) to allow dormer window at rear, additional basement at rear, alteration to rear elevation including demolition of ground floor and rebuilding to match existing (hgy/2003/0816)

21.10.03 Planning permission granted for the variation to elevation approved under (hgy/2002/1731) to allow the provision of a rear fire escape at first floor (hgy/2003/1567)

25.11.03 Planning meeting (office): with agent for explanation of site conditions:

15.12.03 Meeting (site): with building control; enforcement; and site agent:

15.12.03 planning application submitted for works being carried out on site (ie 49 bedroom residential care)

5.01.04 Failure to submit building regulations application as requested at meeting 15.12.03

28.01.04 Meeting with site agent advised current proposals unacceptable

30.01.04 Agent withdraws planning application-enforcement commence drawing up enforcement notice.

05.02.04 Notified of partial collapse

13.02.04 Inspection with building control/health and safety executive Enforcement notice issued. Two separate notices were served one against the unauthorised excavation and the other for unauthorised demolition. The effective date is 22/03/04 for both notices. The owners are required to replace the excess underground space and restore the

garden area to the original ground level within 3 months from the effective date. The second notice requires the construction and complete replacement building similar to the demolished structure within 12 months from the effective date.

Following the issue of the notice the Council called an urgent meeting on the 18th of February 2004 with the developer and has gained assurances that they will restore the building. The developer confirmed that they intend to submit an application to use the building as a nursing home and that it will comply with planning permissions.

Written Question 8 to the Executive Member for the Environment from Cllr Simpson

What steps did he take to inform residents of major mains upgrade works in Hornsey Lane Gardens, N6 and why was permission given while the Council was already using the area as a base for Archway Bridge repair works?

Answer:

Transco informed Council officers of their intention to carry out major works in Hornsey Lane Gardens, N6 in January 2004, and one month prior to their commencement of works. Transco were instructed by Officers to leaflet all residents of their impending gas works and have confirmed that this was carried out on 13th January 2004.

This is not a normal occurrence because through regular meetings with utilities we try as far as possible to get advanced notice of their works. On this occasion Transco had received instructions for these works to be carried out at this time directly from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). It was on these health and safety grounds that Haringey Council were not in a position to deny them permission to carry out their works and the main reason for the limited notification time.

Officers were aware of the potential conflict with the Archway Bridge repair works and instructed Transco not to work for more than 100 metres at a time, to limit the impact of reductions in kerbside parking space to local residents.

The Contractors carrying out the bridge repair works to Archway Bridge have permission to use Hornsey Lane Gardens as a base in November 2003 and to remain there until April 2004. It is unfortunate that Transco's works coincided with the bridge repair works, but I have stated above, we were not in a position to prevent the utility works from taking place.

Written Question 9 to the Executive Member for Environment from Cllr Edge

How much was spent on the consultation on the Stroud Green Scatter Properties Stock Transfer?

Answer

The estimated total costs were £20k, which included both Haringey staff costs and the appointment of an independent tenant advisor.

Written Question 10 to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Bloch

What will be the total cost in (in both fees to consultants and payments for termination of employment) for the reorganisation of the council's media relations function and have proper procedures been followed regarding the termination of employment of several members of the staff.

Answer

Firstly, I can assure you that the council has closely followed its procedures for the restructure of the press and internal communications team. Personnel were consulted by the managers involved at every step. The legal department was also consulted. The unions involved submitted a written response to the proposed re-structure, which was considered and responded to by management. Unions and staff were offered several opportunities to meet with management to discuss the re-structure but declined to take those offers up. 2 members of staff took part in the interview process and one of them was successful and has now been offered a post in the new structure with the second now also re-deployed in another service. In line with our procedures, the other 5 staff are now in the redeployment process and therefore may not be made redundant if they have skills and abilities that can be used elsewhere in the council. However if that is not possible the costs of both the redundancy and the employment of temporary staff to cover posts in the team are being held within the pre agreed budget of the strategy and communications business unit.

Written Question 11 to the Executive Member for Community Involvement from Cllr Williams. The Leader will answer this question in the absence of Cllr Makanji

What deadline was given to the Council for response to the Audit Commission's draft report on Democratic renewal, why did he sanction a process whereby members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were not consulted on the response submitted by the Leader and the Head of Overview and Scrutiny, and will he apologise for this total failure to consult members.

The review was undertaken following concern expressed by the Audit Commission in its Management Letter 2001/02. The main focus of the review was to assess the arrangements for undertaking overview and scrutiny and to comment on whether they were in line with the intended changes set by government. The review consisted of a number of

interviews and focus groups with Members from across the board and with officers.

The Audit Commission determined the process to be followed in its project specification. In line with this, it submitted a draft report on 22nd December with an action plan for the authority to complete. No deadline was given for responding. The action plan drafted by officers and agreed with key Members, including the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview & Scrutiny and was returned to the Audit Commission on 2nd February. This was circulated to all Members at the same time. The Audit Commission will now incorporate the action plan into its draft report and forward the final version of its report to the Chief Executive in due course.

Written Question 12 to the Executive Member for Housing from Cllr Floyd

How much has the Council has paid to private contractors each year to carry out repairs on Council owned housing since maintenance was moved out of house? How much of that is spent on monitoring quality of contractor's work?

Answer

The H.R.A. general repairs Budget for this financial year 2003/4 amounting to £10.8m is comprised of £8.6m (79.7%) to the in - house Direct Labour - Operations division and £2.2m (20.3%) to private contractors.

As part of the forthcoming Best Value review of repairs a large procurement exercise of the reserve term maintenance contract with a value of £2m approx. for general repairs, voids adaptations and roofing works is nearing completion.

The Electrical & Mechanical repairs budget which includes Gas Maint. , Lifts. TV Aerials, Entry Phones repairs budget is £3.4m, all of this work is undertaken by private contractors and has been outsourced for a number of years.

Within the in - house DLO - operating division staffing structure there are surveying staff, who undertake Pre & Post Inspections for both (in-house & private contractor) general repairs work, these post inspections monitor quality of contractors work.

Written Question 13 to the Executive Member for the Environment from Cllr Fabian

How many roads that have been repaired or resurfaced in the past three years have the Council received complaints about within 6 months of the work being carried out?

Answer:

On average we receive 100 Notices a day regarding Streetworks in the borough, roughly 19,000 per year. This year to date we have received 2235 complaints regarding highway defects, of which 337 of them were related to remedial works. The 337 remedial measures covered 158no. roads.

We have received no complaints regarding remedial resurfacing works in the borough, this year to date.

Written Question 14 to the Executive Member for Environment from Cllr Winskill

Would he confirm that the reason that members did not receive the weekly list of planning applications for almost two months (beginning of December to beginning of February 2004) was that the Planning Department was attempting to install new software. Why were members not told in advance that the weekly lists would be unavailable?

Answer

I confirm that the Planning Service was unable to send out weekly list of planning applications due to the need to convert the Planning IT Database.

The conversion was due to take place over 6 working days, which would have resulted in no disruption to the production of the weekly list. The conversion took much longer than anticipated and this resulted in the production of the weekly list being disrupted. It was not possible to warn Members in advance as the disruption was unplanned.