

Full Council - Monday, 23rd November, 2015

18. WRITTEN ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS 1-6

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FULL COUNCIL: 23 NOVEMBER 2015

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO ORAL QUESTIONS

ORAL QUESTION 1 - TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR NEWTON:

What progress has there been with the bidding process for Hornsey Town Hall?

ANSWER

The Hornsey Town Hall OJEU Contract Notice has been dispatched and should appear in the EU Journal within the next few days. At this point organisations will have an opportunity to view the tender documentation and decide whether this is a project they would like to bid for. This is the first stage of the Competitive Dialogue process.

ORAL QUESTION 2 - TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM COUNCILLOR DORON:

In light of the announcements made by George Osborne at the Conservative Party conference regarding the devolution of business rates to local government, can the Cabinet Member tell us what plans are being made by the Council to ensure that we continue to attract more businesses to the borough?

ANSWER

Attracting businesses to Haringey was already a key part of our Economic Development and Growth Strategy, published in January, and recent announcements on business rates retention have sharpened our focus on this area. Through the Opportunity Investment Fund, which is jointly supported by the GLA, we offer loans and grants which incentivise businesses to locate or grow in Tottenham. The Fund prioritises businesses which are in our priority sectors (such as the recent loan to Albion Knit to expand their manufacturing operation) or which contribute to the wider regeneration of the area, like the recently opened Chicken Town.

We have also launched a consultation on changes to business rates relief where it is proposed the Council pioneer a discount scheme targeted at priority light industrial and office sectors. It has been calculated that the growth in the council's business rates base generated by attracting businesses into the borough will, over time, more than offset any loss of income from the temporary discounts. As well as making Haringey a business-friendly borough we also need to communicate that message effectively to businesses. With that in mind, we are about to launch a Haringey business directory and re-vamp our business website, clarifying our offer and providing straightforward and helpful advice and access to other forms of support. I am also delighted that Haringey's businesses have recently come together to form the Haringey Business Alliance, which shows that we have an increasingly strong and confident business community in the borough.

ORAL QUESTION 3 - TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ENGERT:

Transport for London have proposed 2 different routes that go through Haringey, one via Wood Green Station and the other via Alexandra Palace, which route is the council backing?

ANSWER

Crossrail 2 will make a transformational difference to Haringey. Whatever the final decision on station locations, this investment will radically improve connections to the rest of London for thousands of existing residents and businesses and further still improve the borough's potential for much-needed growth. We are still working on our formal response to Transport for London's consultation, but at this stage we think that the single Wood Green station, rather than the two stations at Turnpike Lane and Alexandra Palace, would be preferable. The Wood Green option would be a powerful engine for growth and improvement in the Wood Green town centre, as envisaged in our emerging Investment Framework for the area. This arrangement would still allow for interchange with the Piccadilly Line (at Wood Green) and with mainline services (at New Southgate), while avoiding the loss of much valued open space at Avenue Gardens which would have been necessary to bring Crossrail 2 to Alexandra Palace station.

This is of course an on-balance view – I recognise the benefits of stations at Alexandra Palace and Turnpike Lane to existing residents and businesses, even if growth potential at those locations is much lower, and an Alexandra Palace station does offer a wider range of interchange options than New Southgate. Of course the future of Alexandra Palace itself, and the wider Park, is a vital consideration in planning for the future – not only in thinking about the detailed configuration of Crossrail 2, but also about the wider future of Wood Green and its connections to the Palace. I am determined that – whatever the final alignment of Crossrail 2 – accessibility to and from Alexandra Palace and Park must be at the forefront of our minds in the way the stations are designed, named and signposted, and in the way the wider area is planned.

ORAL QUESTION 4 - TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR G BULL:

Given the importance of ensuring that every Haringey resident who is eligible to vote, is registered to do so; can the Leader update us on what the current registration rate is within the borough and what the Council is doing to reach and inform those residents that have not yet registered?

ANSWER

Under the previous 'Household' registration system, Councils would often express the number of Household forms returned against the number sent out as the 'registration rate'. This estimate is much more difficult under the new Individual Electoral Registration (IER) system, and as registration can take place continuously (especially with online registration), the point at which a register is published is simply a snapshot in time.

That said, we are now in a watershed period with the so-called 'end to transition' of IER, and a register will be formally published on 01 December 2015. Officers have been working tremendously hard to encourage those who have not yet registered to do so, including:

- A mission to reach every home at least once with a Household Enquiry Form (HEF), Invitation to Register forms (ITRs) and, where necessary, on many more occasions with reminder forms and visits in person by the council's team of 70 canvassers. This has

been underway since August, and officers have been determined to take advantage of as much of the government's resourcing support as possible.

- Highlighting the importance of voter registration through the council's various communication channels. This has included building on the success of the pre-election voter registration campaign through articles in Haringey People and Haringey People Extra e-bulletin emails, Facebook, Twitter, press releases and the council's website.
- Using data sets from other parts of the council to assist with the completion of applications. IER legislation recommends local data matching to ascertain whether those who have been slow to respond still live in the borough, and so officers are making extensive use of data sets from other parts of the council to assist with the completion of applications. There will also continue to be engagement with a variety of outside agencies which may be able to help.

There is a more detailed report on this due at Corporate Committee on 26th November. Registration campaigning will also continue past 01 December publication, in preparation for the mayoral election in the spring.

ORAL QUESTION 5 - TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FROM COUNCILLOR MORRIS:

The serious case review in Child O raised serious concerns about the way social services operate and the impact this has on the most vulnerable children in the borough, do you think it is acceptable that the issues raised by a previous review from 2010/11 were also a problem in this latest case?

ANSWER

It has always seemed to me that the same few themes emerge from Serious Case Reviews, wherever in the country they take place. This is indicative of the challenges and complexities faced by all agencies in dealing with child safeguarding and the prevention of significant harm to children. As part of the learning process from SCRs, officers have looked at all of those conducted in this authority since 2009 and have identified six key themes, which are:

- Weakness in professional challenge
- Failures to assess the wider family, environment and case history
- Poor inter-agency communication
- The need to intervene earlier
- Lack of professional awareness over emotional harm inflicted on the child
- Organisational, planning and process failures

Some of these themes were apparent in the SCR on Child O and we have already put in place a number of actions to address learning points from this review including, for example, improving multiagency working in the field of Child Sexual Exploitation and in the refinement of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, strengthening the quality assurance functions to enable more robust professional challenge and learning and a greater focus on listening to the voice of the child.

The task of applying learning from SCRs and strengthening services lies at the heart of our improvement agenda, which takes a whole-system approach to ensure that improvements are embedded and sustained.

ORAL QUESTION 6 - TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR JOGEE:

Does the Cabinet Member share my concerns about the proposed police cuts that are expected to be announced within the Spending Review and can she tell us what the Council is doing to maintain and improve community safety in the borough?

ANSWER

I share colleagues' concerns about the proposed police cuts, as we wait for what might be announced in the Spending Review on 25th November. We do know that this will mean a reduced police presence in Haringey.

Nevertheless I can confirm that the Council is continuing to work with the police and other partners to maintain and improve community safety in Haringey through a variety of projects, including:

- Developing an approach with the community and partners to reduce group and gang violence in Haringey
- Monthly joint tasking and deployment to high and emerging crime areas. This includes deployment of the Council's Partnership Policing Team (PPT)
- The rollout of joint action plans across the seven 'priority' wards. The thrust of this work is to increase visibility, reduce crime and improve confidence
- The distribution of 10,000 kits to mark property aimed at reducing and preventing burglaries. Two thirds of these kits have already been delivered by police officers visiting homes door-to-door.