Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Work Planning; 2018-20

Top Themes from Scrutiny Survey:
1. Employment
2. Child Poverty
3. Community Cohesion
4. Growth and Inward Investment
5. Council Customer Services (Call Centre /Customer Service Centres)
6. Libraries
7. Carbon Reduction
8. Support to local businesses
9. Local taxation (such as Council Tax)
10. Culture and the arts
11. Local Benefits (such as Housing Benefit)
12. Equalities and diversity

Issues Suggested in Scrutiny Survey or at Scrutiny Café

No.	Suggestion	Comments and Feedback from Survey and Café
1.	Consultation and engagement *(Committee suggestion)*	• There are considerable benefits from community engagement if done properly; • Communication should be two way with action taken in response to the views of residents reported back to them; • Communities of interest need to be maintained; • The change of emphasis from Council to Borough Plan is significant but needs to be realised and residents engaged positively with the development of it.
2.	Growth and small business *(Committee suggestion)*	• Strategy for small business and supporting local growth
3.	Budget savings	• Previous budget proposals, whether the savings proposed were made and what the impact was of the savings.
4.	Child Poverty	• Issues in schools highlight food poverty, poor housing and increasing mental health needs.
5.	Customer services	• Customer Services need to be just that. Dismissive, confrontational attitudes are not helpful and do nothing to improve the Council's relationship with the people who live in the Borough and pay their Council Tax;

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6.	General contact with the council	• Numbers and departments can be difficult to contact. The culture of email and not phone is unhelpful. No accountability"; • It is becoming increasingly difficult to communicate with the Council. Residents who telephone can be passed around between departments and there is less and less human contact; • E-mails are not always responded to; • It can be time consuming chasing a response to a query.
7.	Financial strategy	• Financial strategy needs to be prioritised given the effect years of austerity is having on local government throughout the country. The HDV was not the answer but some form of creative publicly-managed financial arrangement must be possible? • Fund everything properly, work out the shortfall, increase council tax to make up the shortfall; • What services should be prioritised, to what level and how they will be paid for. Fairness in how budget changes were implemented. Consideration of increasing Council Tax.
8.	Libraries	• Libraries are essential communal spaces for young and old; • It is vital that the library service is maintained at least its current level - many people do not have access to the internet and can't afford books. Early book reading has been proved to lead to better educational attainment later in life; • Libraries are an essential part of the life of a community, an outing for children to choose a book, a refuge for reading for the elderly and others.
9.	Working with the voluntary and community sector	• Working together with local voluntary/community sector, strengthening their capacity (building) and working with them to attract external investment in the borough; • There are examples of good co-operation and joint working between Council services and volunteers, such as within parks, which could be replicated more widely; • Do we involve and support voluntary organisations to bid for services?
10.	Proud and prosperous	• Looking at how best to implement 'proud and prosperous' Haringey programmes that will attract visitors from neighbouring boroughs to feed into local (as well as joint) enterprise and productivity. Encouraging good practices, rewarding (not necessarily, financially) them by promoting the excellence. • The Council should make every effort to improve the image of the Borough by championing the good things and community assets to a wider audience.
11.	Community cohesion	• Looking at how to foster links between residents throughout the Borough,

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		especially East - West, where there are few public transport connections. Could include partnerships, local leagues, voluntary sector bodies spanning the borough, projects, volunteering. • Intergenerational involvement and the outcomes that can be achieved from young people and older people working together.
11.	Introduction of welfare changes, especially Universal Credit	• Support for residents affected by roll out of Universal Credit from October in Haringey; • How is the Council preparing for the roll out in October? How will vulnerable people be protected? What will the Council do to mitigate the problems faced by people waiting 4/5 or more weeks for the benefit to begin particularly in terms of rent arrears? • What will the Council do to mitigate the problems faced by people who are sanctioned, particularly where there are mental or physical health issues that make compliance difficult or impossible? • The impact of universal credit, which will be huge. This is of concern because it will affect so many people in Haringey, and especially disabled people, women and children. What is the council doing to prepare for this? What practical assistance can it provide? Is there a joined-up plan? • The most crucial issue coming to Haringey is the rollout of Universal Credit. In other authorities it has been clear that up to 6 weeks delay in payment from opening a claim paid monthly in arrears leads to immediate cycle of debt, hunger and destitution. Haringey must not allow this to happen.
12.	Benefits advice	• The impact of staff from the benefits team giving residents the wrong information about their entitlement to benefits, and or ignoring residents' questions when they raise queries about Housing benefit and the council tax reduction scheme. This is of concern to me because I know the disastrous effects stress has on an individual's health and wellbeing. When the council's officers consistently behave in an inconsiderate and unprofessional manner, it reflects poorly on Haringey Council and increases dissatisfaction with council services. Leading many vulnerable people away from the support they need. The problems residents face can then escalate to unnecessarily threatening letters, fines, bailiffs, poor health and a lot of wasted time for both the council and the residents involved. All of these problems can be prevented by having a more conscientious and thoughtful approach to resolving the issues the council face. By ignoring them, the council will repeat cycles of deprivation and distrust especially amongst Women and BAME residents. If the council do not have a reference point to relate to the most pressing issues that residents are facing, they cannot be an effective council, and will not be able to meet the needs of the residents who are most in need.
13.	Apprenticeships	• Apprenticeships would give youngsters a goal to achieve and they would feel useful to society, having learned a skill. Employers should be encouraged to

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		train apprentices and keep them on in jobs later on. They should also respect the speed limit. Cameras and tougher penalties should be put in place. Too many people are affected by pollution, particularly around Wightman road, the Ladder rungs and Green Lane. Libraries are an essential part of the life of a community, an outing for children to choose a book, a refuge for reading for the elderly and others."
14.	Council website and on-line services	• Further development and improvement of the Council website and on-line services such as the issuing of parking permits.
15.	Arts provision	• Better Arts provision. Support for Alexandra Palace and Park and the restored Alexandra Palace Theatre. • More attention should be paid to the arts/creative sector which is an asset to the Borough, for example at the Wood Green Cultural Quarter.
16.	Local amenities	• Recognition and support for local amenities e.g. heritage centres, for the benefit of the whole community.
17.	Community Buildings	• A large number of community buildings had been lost in recent years. An inventory needed to be undertaken of them.
18.	Adult Entertainment Venues	• It is likely that there are premises within the borough that had been licensed for adult entertainment. There needs to be a discussion on the impact of these on the community.
19.	Recruitment and Retention of Key Workers	• A wide range of work areas, including parks, are now finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff due to the cost of housing in London. There needs to be a wider definition of key workers and more generous provision; • Haringey often has to compete with other public sector organisations that were able to offer inner London weighting. • There seems to be a lot of churn in Haringey Council staff while staff morale seemed low at Homes for Haringey. The reasons for this need to be established to improve the culture.
20.	Poverty and disadvantage amongst old and disabled people	• Poverty and disadvantage among the old and disabled. Why do you list child poverty as an issue and not poverty among the Borough's vulnerable adults? They should be identified as groups who deserve attention. The rely more than any other groups on the Council for support and have suffered the most in the austerity period since 2010.

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21.	Race Equality	• The Runnymede Trust did a survey of Haringey's race equality scorecard, drawing helpfully on council statistics which it freely provided. However, a comprehensive action plan was never devised. The previous councillor in charge of Overview and Scrutiny was present and interested in following up at OSC on this. It would be wise, open and transparent to acknowledge locally that the levels of disparity in our council's representative structures, its services, impacts and needs need to have a corresponding action plan around race. This is particularly true given that the Council has already begun work on staff groups to reflect some race equality issues, started by a BME staff group. Secondly, there is no community infrastructure body now that the Haringey Race Equality Council has left. The risk is that we think that many aspects of this deep rooted inequality are resolved, when in fact they are not. Discussing it and addressing it will impact on many other aspects of inequality and support local people and structures to be engaged and able to influence Council spending priorities and create responses to improve the situation and improve life chances, health and opportunities.
22.	Mitigating the "hostile environment"	• The Hostile Environment policy covers many aspects of people's lives: renting accommodation, opening a bank account, getting or retaining a job, education, health etc. We appreciate that the Council can't reverse the policy, but it can take steps to mitigate the impact, provide leadership, and state its disapproval of its staff being turned into border force officers.
16.	Freedom of Information	• Are officers abiding by the letter and spirit of the FoI Acts? Do electors and their representatives get enough information to make informed decisions?
17.	Public Realm	• Apply for GLA funding to introduce public water fountains. Reduction in use of plastic bottles; • Disinvestment in the public realm and long term trajectory of a reduction in public resources. • A piece of work should be undertaken around town centres and the knock-on effect of their deterioration. To incorporate car parks, homelessness and rough sleeping. It was felt that this was cross-cutting and could be done by OSC.
18.	5G	• There is a serious problem about to arise with the use of 5G. How will the Council cope with a serious health hazard?