

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21st February 2011

Q 'N' A: Item 7, Cabinet Member Questions – Cabinet Member for Finance and Sustainability, Councillor Joe Goldberg

Questions on Finance briefing

No	Page/ Point	Question/Observation	Answer (Where applicable)
<u>Questions from Cllr Joseph Ejiofor</u>			
1	Submitted as part of questions to Leader 4/10/10	The Council is currently undertaking a corporate property review. Can you clarify the objectives that you hope that it will achieve?	<p>A review of the corporate administrative buildings was recently completed resulting in a revised accommodation plan approved by Cabinet on 21 December 2010. The outcome from this review will be additional reductions in premises costs through further intensification of the use of space. The estimated budget savings from efficiency and expected reduction in demand for space is included within the current budget proposals.</p> <p>The current review of properties held as part of the commercial portfolio is aimed at addressing units that have become difficult to let, to consider whether these should be disposed or whether it is viable to invest in their improvement to meet the Council's financial and economic regeneration objectives.</p> <p>In addition, the Council will review all buildings vacated as a result of changes or reductions in service requirements, with the view of considering opportunities for rationalising property holdings and addressing new requirements through co-location and integration. The full scope of this review will become clearer during the next financial year when an analysis of the changes and requirements is completed.</p>
2	Submitted as part of questions	In the light of the current situation of austerity measures and fiscal restraint, it has become incumbent upon all Councils to investigate	The Council's policy is to minimise property holding costs and maximising capital receipts by disposing all properties that are surplus to requirements regardless of the prevailing fiscal constraints.



	to Leader 4/10/10	any and all sources of revenue that they may have access to, to alleviate budgetary shortfalls. In this context, has the Council reviewed its policy on the disposal of Council assets?	<p>Properties declared surplus to their current requirements are assessed for suitability in meeting other Council needs. Sometimes properties identified as potentially surplus to requirements are held in the short to medium term pending availability of alternative accommodation for any residual requirements, or as a contingency for other uses by the Council or partner organisations.</p> <p>If there is no justifiable alternative use and the property has no longer term strategic value e.g. in terms of regeneration objectives or likely future growth in capital values, the property is sold to optimise the disposal value for the Council.</p>
		<u>Questions from Cllr David Winskill</u>	<i>In view of the substantial pressures being experienced in the Finance department, members of the LibDem Group have tried to keep questions to a minimum. We have also indicated where we will be asking oral questions on 31st January but do not require an advance written reply.</i>
3	1	Audit & Risk Management <i>Oral</i> : Why have the number of public liability claims been falling?	Oral response
4	2	Audit & Risk Management Shared services with Waltham Forest: please tell me which areas are being considered for sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial discussions have only focused on internal audit. Likely to explore joint procurement arrangements for services already outsourced. • Potential to review in house service delivery arrangements although Haringey's in house team is small compared to Waltham Forest so Haringey would not gain large savings from joining up the two teams, however there may be other non-financial savings from joining.
5	2	Benefits & Local Taxation: <i>oral</i> have there been discussions with central London Boroughs about a "handover" of clients receiving Housing Benefits?	Oral Response:
6	5	Corporate property Services: challenges Future shared use of council buildings with	The Council already accommodates a number of teams from partner organisations where these form part of multi agency integrated services, for example, the



		<p>or through partner organisations: please provide me with on this initiative.</p>	<p>Children's Services multi-disciplinary partner team which includes the police. Other examples currently include space for 20 NHS staff within the Learning Difficulties team and the police within both our Safer Communities and Youth Offending Services teams.</p> <p>The Council is presently in discussion with three NHS organisations with a view to accommodating up to 150 staff within our administrative offices at Wood Green. As well as utilising surplus spaces within buildings this is likely to provide opportunities for closer working and potential efficiencies in the future.</p> <p>Going forward the initiative is to further explore efficiency savings through co-location of front and back office functions of different public, private and voluntary sector providers to generate economies of scale to realise financial and carbon savings.</p>
		<p><u>Questions from Cllr. Karen Alexander</u></p>	
7	2	<p><u>Energy & Sustainability</u> Are any of these schemes in jeopardy because of govt cuts? If so, which ones and does the council have a strategy to find alternative funding streams for these excellent initiatives?</p>	<p>The Councils' Sustainable Investment Fund (SIF) is a longstanding energy efficiency fund, the revenue of which is generated by the saving on energy bills realised by the projects that it funds. This funding stream has been earmarked for future invest to save projects on Council buildings such as lighting controls and has been prioritised to fund projects with the swiftest return on investment, thus maximising the revenue available.</p> <p>The Council has identified external funding opportunities, such as the London Green Fund, which provides loans for energy efficiency projects. The fund management procurement is due to be concluded in Spring 2011, and the Council is keeping abreast of developments. The Green Fund could be used instead of SIF.</p> <p>There is therefore no immediate and direct threat to the Councils carbon reduction schemes, but should the situation change, then alternative funding sources will have already been identified.</p>



		<p>The Council has several grant funded projects due to complete in 2010/11 and 2011/12. This includes the Mayor of London Low Carbon Zone, Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Low Carbon Communities Challenge and Local Carbon Frameworks Pilot. Grant funding for 2010/11 is not affected. The level of grant funding available in 2011/12 is likely to be limited.</p> <p>Decent Homes funding is being cut, however the allocation of the remaining funding has not yet been confirmed. Alternative sources of funding for carbon reduction measures are being researched as part of the Councils Local Carbon Framework Pilot (and therefore the 40:20 Carbon Management Plan).</p> <p>Funding for Warm Front grants geared to tackling fuel poverty (which impacts on carbon emissions from energy use in homes) is being cut by the Government from £345m in 2010/11 to £100m by 2012/13. Haringey Council has been very successful in referring residents to Warm Front and has achieved one of the highest referral rates of all London boroughs.</p> <p>The Government has announced it will “refocus” the Feed In Tariff which is likely to mean a reduction in the Government subsidy for renewable energy from 2013 onwards.</p>