

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011**  
**Q 'N' A: Item 9 – the Leader’s Portfolio – Councillor Claire Kober**

No	Page/ Point	Question/Observation	Answer (Where applicable)																
<b><u>Questions from Cllr David Winskill</u></b>																			
1	2 Media and PR	<p><i>As the impact of Government cuts start to hit home harder to people amidst misinformation about how Councils are handling the issue, our emphasis will be on commitment to service provision and support for our residents.</i></p> <p>Please tell me what this means.</p>	<p>Some sections of the media have sought to portray cuts necessitated by deep government spending reductions as being caused by local councils. This is in spite of councils in general being run more efficiently than other parts of the public sector. The cuts will start to be more noticeable to people when the new financial year starts and information provision will help to explain any service changes and how services can be accessed. It is essential that people are kept informed during times of change.</p>																
2	Marketing Comms	<p><i>Work continues to get the Council’s first ever fully-costed annual publicity plan in place for 2011/12</i></p> <p>Other than being “fully-costed”, how were previous publicity plans developed?</p>	<p>Individual services developed their own plans and usually went to the corporate communications team to cost them and carry them out. The SFR of council publicity projects recommended that the much reduced expenditure would be used to best effect by planning centrally. Work was always properly costed but will now be part of a corporate programme.</p>																
3	Debt Recovery	<p>Other than Council Charge, how much is currently owed to the council by residents, service users and others? Please indicate for what the money is owed.</p>	<p>Debts outstanding across ledgers (excluding Council Tax):</p> <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td align="right"><b>£,000</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Temporary Accommodation</td> <td align="right">£8,035</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing Rent</td> <td align="right">£10,420</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NNDR</td> <td align="right">£4,102</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sundry Debt</td> <td align="right">£12,672</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leaseholder debt</td> <td align="right">£12,762</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commercial Rent</td> <td align="right">£908</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parking</td> <td align="right">£21,326</td> </tr> </table>		<b>£,000</b>	Temporary Accommodation	£8,035	Housing Rent	£10,420	NNDR	£4,102	Sundry Debt	£12,672	Leaseholder debt	£12,762	Commercial Rent	£908	Parking	£21,326
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4	Social Care Division	<p><i>The team is managing 153 social care proceedings which is an increase of 26 cases from Apr 2010. There has been a significant increase in the number of community care judicial review cases that lawyers are dealing with.</i></p> <p>What has prompted the increase in these cases?</p>	<p>The increase in community care/JR cases are due to a number of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) an increasing number of adult Court of Protection cases ( now taking instructions from housing and anti social behaviour teams) ,</li> <li>ii) requests for community care assessments, review of service provision and challenges in respect of those decisions,</li> <li>iii) service provisions and continuing care responsibility between the PCT and the local authority and associated difficulties</li> <li>iv) increase in service users</li> <li>v) increase in general litigiousness from solicitors conducting this area of work.</li> </ul> <p>Probably attributable to cuts in legal aid funding in other areas such as family and child care.</p> <p>A successful JR claim against the local authority would also include a cost order against the local authority. This trend is likely to increase given the proposed budget cuts.</p>
	General		
5	Shared Services	<p>Please give details of all discussions with other local authorities and agencies about sharing services – what services have been under discussion, how are the discussions progressing and are there any details available of estimated savings and other benefits</p>	<p>The council is currently talking to a wide range of agencies and other authorities about sharing services. These include our preferred partner LB Waltham Forest , local authorities who are members of the North London Strategic Alliance (NLSA) , members of the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) , a number of other London Boroughs through various pan London procurement projects, and strategic partners within the Borough such as the PCT .</p> <p>The opportunities for Shared Services currently being explored with Waltham Forest are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the corporate call centre</li> <li>• HR service centre</li> <li>• legal service</li> <li>• organizational development &amp; learning</li> </ul>



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- audit service
- electoral service
- economic development service
- trading standards consortium
- planning & building control
- school meals
- joint procurement of building cleaning services  
(other opportunities will be evaluated in due course)

Discussions are at a feasibility stage on most of the opportunities with Waltham Forest, with a deadline of March 2011 to agree those services that will actively be pursued to deliver a Shared Services Outcome.

Three of the above services may also involve Enfield as a third partner to develop shared services options. We are currently also working with Enfield and others on a number of Children and Young Peoples Service links.

As would be expected with many of the projects still at feasibility stage, benefits including savings are still being identified. However 3 projects are proceeding quickly to shared service, and these include a shared Economic Development Service which has been reported to Cabinet with a potential saving of up to £100,000 per annum , sharing a head of the Electoral Services which will produce an estimated saving of £35,000 per annum, and sharing a number of HR services.

Other benefits include more effective procurement of adult and children placements, which reduces the need for further revenue growth within these services. Many of the other projects involve joint procurement across a number of authorities, and the NLWA projects have produced savings which have already been built into the council's base budget.



		<b><u>Questions from Cllr Karen Alexander</u></b>	
6	1 Human Resource s	<p><u>Voluntary Redundancy</u></p> <p>What help and support will be offered to staff faced with compulsory redundancy?</p>	<p>A range of workshops and other support options are in place to help those facing compulsory redundancy to better cope with their situation and to provide them with practical skills to aid them in their job search. They cover a range of topics including:</p> <p><b>CV &amp; Interview Skills</b> - a popular half day workshop with a total of 175 staff already attended and a further 102 staff booked to attend over the coming weeks.</p> <p><b>Maintaining Resilience &amp; Taking Control</b> - two workshops designed to provide those facing redundancy with the skills and knowledge to enable them to manage this major life change. Approximately 160 staff have attended these courses with over 40 staff booked for the coming weeks.</p> <p><b>Starting your own business</b> – this has been attended by 175 staff and along with CV &amp; Interview Skills is the most popular of the workshops offered.</p> <p>We recognise that not everyone feels able to participate in a workshop at what is a very stressful time for them and for these employees a “Transitions” workbook is available which gives information and practical exercises which people can work through. The booklet provides practical help and advice about dealing with change and planning their next career step. A comprehensive Redundancy Handbook (published by the Financial Services Authority) is sent to all employees who are notified of their compulsory redundancy. The booklet gives a wide range of financial information including benefit entitlement, re-training options and general financial advice.</p> <p>The e-learning courses which are part of the council’s short course programme are also available to all employees who may be looking for practical development in business skills.</p> <p>Details of websites are available on the Supporting Change pages which help employees to target their job search either to specific vocational areas or to become</p>



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			<p>familiar with more generic job sites that are commonly used. This is especially useful for those who have been working for the council for a number of years and who may not be familiar with job sites or searching for vacancies on the internet.</p> <p>Financial queries, especially claiming benefit, are areas that most employees who are facing redundancy need information about and details have been provided by Job Centre Plus and are posted onto the Supporting Change pages. In addition, a free hour long finance seminar is held monthly (provided by Money Made Clear, the government's consumer education body) to give a range of impartial financial information and advice. The seminars have been running for the last couple of years and the feedback has always been positive.</p> <p>Overall, the support offered is a mix of practical and advisory and feedback received so far has been positive.</p>
7	<p><u>Consultants and Agency staff</u></p> <p>With a high number of posts being made redundant will the council be proactively looking to replace consultants and agency staff with council staff earmarked for redundancy?</p>		<p>The number of agency and consultant posts has been consistently reducing over the past 12 months. Established vacancies have also been reducing as vacancies are deleted during service restructures and reviews.</p> <p>There are currently a total of 42 redeployees on the corporate list, 23 of which will have left the authority by the end of March 2011. Of these more than half are graded at PO2 or above and therefore only vacancies graded within the PO grade band would be considered to be suitable alternative vacancies. Agency workers within this level of job are social workers, lawyers or planners, all of which require professional qualifications that the redeployees do not have.</p> <p>The agency workers in lower graded posts are predominantly social care roles, catering, cleaning, recycling, parking and gardening roles which are often part time or shift type work and often not considered suitable work alternatives by the redeployees themselves. However, a total of 8 agency posts are being filled by redeployees, covering posts such as receptionist, environmental health officer and admin.</p>



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			<p>The other factor that needs to be considered is agency posts are often only available for short periods of time – 2-3 months as they are either covering in areas which are undergoing formal consultation or they are in areas soon due for review. Whilst every effort is made to place redeployees into short term posts, the number of jobs available for doing this is continuing to reduce.</p> <p>Any established vacancy which is to be filled is sent to the redeployment team first to check for a suitable match before being advertised internally.</p>														
8	3 Communi cations	<p><u>Web</u></p> <p>How much will the exercise of “refreshing” the council’s website cost?</p>	<p>The project is still at scoping stage. Much of the work is proposed to be provided by in-house staff. Costs are anticipated in the region of £15k.</p>														
		<b>Questions from Cllr Martin Newton</b>															
9	General	<p>Given the hours put in by members, co-optees and officers in scrutiny of the budget and the response to recommendations "Not Agreed" by Cabinet - Do you feel that you are allowing Scrutiny to fulfil its full potential?</p>	<p>Yes. My Cabinet colleagues and I take seriously the contribution which scrutiny makes. We consider all recommendations made by scrutiny on their merits and in light of existing Council priorities and policy. However I don't recognise the “hours being put in”, or for that matter the number of questions being asked, as an indication of quality. To me scrutiny is at its best when its work programme and discussions are clearly rooted in issues which matter to local people.</p>														
10	Human Resource s Discretio nary spend	<p>What was the total annual discretionary expenditure for the last 2 full financial years and what was the total spend per month since April 2010?</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Discretionary spend in Directorates £000's</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2008/09 Financial Year</td> <td>£8,874</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2009/10 Financial Year</td> <td>£8,825</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2010</td> <td>£791</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 2010</td> <td>£691</td> </tr> <tr> <td>June 2010</td> <td>£736</td> </tr> <tr> <td>July 2010</td> <td>£731</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Discretionary spend in Directorates £000's	2008/09 Financial Year	£8,874	2009/10 Financial Year	£8,825	April 2010	£791	May 2010	£691	June 2010	£736	July 2010	£731
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11	Human Resources Agency staff	How many Agency staff were employed April 2010 - January 2011? Have you considered dispensing with all agency staff?	<p>April 2010 - 658 Full time equivalent (FTE) January 2011 - 378 FTE</p> <p>As outlined in the briefing note Managers have been regularly reviewing the need for agency workers and this will continue. However, the agency workers that are still engaged are fulfilling key frontline roles, for example over 130 of them are in social work or social care roles, and 100 are in catering, cleaning, recycling, parking and gardening. It is therefore difficult to dispense with these workers without an impact on frontline service delivery.</p>																
12	Communications Haringey People	Given current guidance - How many editions of Haringey People are being proposed for publication per year?	The figure is currently six but would be reduced to four if recommended government guidance is ratified or if it is decided to make savings in addition to those so far achieved by reducing from ten a year.																