

APPENDIX ONE

Written questions and answers to the Leader of the Council

i) Are you intending to produce specific strategy documents around the Gershon/VFM initiatives and are updates being reported to the Executive?

Delivering value for money is a key part of the responsibility of every service and as such it is embedded in the business and financial planning process. The cost, performance and perception thread will guide service planning, investment strategy, value for money reviews and cross cutting Gershon efficiency projects. Executive will be updated regularly via the medium term business and financial planning process. Overview and Scrutiny will also play a key role in assisting in the delivery of value for money through their review process.

ii) Given that the CPA gave Haringey a 'poor' with uncertain prospects of improvement just 3 years ago, what do you attribute to Haringey's improvement in performance?

Haringey was never rated as poor for the CPA. Our 2002 score was 'weak' improving to 'fair' in 2004 and achieving "good" in 2005. Throughout all our CPA assessments, the Audit Commission acknowledged that we have put in place the building blocks that would enable us to improve year on year.

Improvement in performance has been achieved through:

- Clear ambition for the borough
- Strong leadership (political and managerial)
- Partnership working and
- Sustained focus on improving front line services

iii) Given your stated commitment to improved consultation, what steps did you take to ensure that residents were fully consulted on the recent Neighbourhood structure changes?

There was not consultation on the proposals because the Executive decided that there should be a universal approach. There has been a full briefing at the Area Assembles on the new structure and teams, there was extensive discussion with the JUNP and West Green boards and there will be extensive consultation on the work programmes for the new teams.

iv) I am surprised that there is no reference in the O D and Performance part of your briefing to IT or the Tech Refresh. Given the specific project management issues that this project highlighted, what steps have you taken to ensure that there is greater transparency and openness, as well as accountability?

The Action Plan agreed by the Executive in February set out the response to the Audit Commission findings. The key product of this, for members, is a regular report on the programme to the Executive. This report is open and about the progress of each of the projects in the programme, using a traffic light system. The report is compiled within the Improvement & Performance team and challenge within the officer body is, therefore, built in.

v) I am surprised that there is no reference to Star rating in the Housing part of your briefing. Given that a preliminary report by the Audit Commission stated that, after a full ALMO inspection, 'an inspection would have been assessed as a fair, (one star)service with uncertain prospects for improvement', what steps are you taking to implement fully recommendations made by the inspector and what contingency plan have you got in place in the event that the additional government funding will not be made available?

Getting a minimum 2-Star rating from the Audit Commission's inspection of Homes for Haringey is one of our highest priorities for the next 12 months. Success will release much-needed housing investment in excess of £200 million.

That is why we remain committed to delivering the improvements needed to our services in order to achieve two stars. As part of the recent indicative inspection, The Audit Commission recognised how far we have come over the last couple of years, and how effective many of our improvements have been. They were also impressed by our level of commitment and by the quality of our improvement plans.

Both Homes for Haringey and the Council's Housing Service have detailed action plans in place that will enable us to make the final required improvements to our housing services. Implementation of these plans is being steered by a Housing Improvement Programme Board, chaired by the Director of Social Services, and overseen by the Chief Executive and myself.

I remain wholly confident that the improvements that we have made to date, and those that are planned between now and the date of the inspection will allow us to reach our goal of two stars. Equally importantly, they will contribute to providing consistently high quality housing services to our residents.

vi) Given the onus on VFM, can you state for the Committee, what is the current spending figure that can be attributed directly to the Tech Refresh project?

The total spend on TR was £19.4 million against a revised budget of £19.6 million. The TR project is now completed. Insource is separate and the £2.9m agreed at the June Executive is a consequence of this decision to in source. There is a commitment to look at the VFM of TR and this could be done as a joint exercise with O&S but will clearly need to be scoped carefully.