

## APPENDIX 1

### Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008 Advance Questions to the Cabinet Member for Resources

Page/ Point	Question/Observation	Answer (Where applicable)
	<b>From Councillor Egan:</b>	
p4	<p>1. Corporate Finance</p> <p>Can the lead member comment on how the agreed Budget Strategy is developing?</p> <p>(1) Have there been significant variations in the proposed savings/efficiencies proposed by Business Units?</p> <p>(2) Have any new savings been identified?</p> <p>Can the Lead member identify virements between proposed savings and what has or will be happening?</p> <p>Please note: a similar question was also submitted from Cllr Bull</p>	<p>(1) It is assumed that the question relates to the budget strategy for 2008/09, as the 2007/08 accounts have been closed. The budget strategy is developing well with the agreed savings being delivered as planned as reported at period 2 of 2008/09.</p> <p>(2) No new savings options have so far been identified, but the business planning process includes work to develop new options over the summer period for consideration in this year's budget process.</p> <p>(3) No virements relating to agreed savings have so far been proposed for this year, however if alternatives to approved savings are proposed these will be reported to Cabinet for approval in the normal way.</p>
p2	<p>2. Homeworking Pilot. What other areas apart from BLT have been identified for inclusion?</p> <p>Will an analysis be made on the effects of this working be made in relation to Career Development?</p>	<p>THE Home working pilots are now complete. Enforcement and Corporate Property Services were the other two business units identified to take part in the SMART Working pilots.</p> <p>However, it was always anticipated, because of the nature of</p>



**Haringey Council**

the work, that these other services would only have staff practice occasional home working (i.e. one day per week).

Currently home working opportunities are only limited by the appropriateness of the role being carried out by the BLT officer and their own interest in taking part (i.e. we asked for volunteers to take part in the pilot). In BLT, we have Team Managers, Team Leaders and Deputy Team Leaders all able to practice occasional home working and maintain their line manager responsibilities as well as full time home working BLT Officers, who work from home for 80% of the week. .

As part of the evaluation, staff were asked if they thought their career progressions were limited because they were home working. 23% of respondents agreed it did affect their prospects whilst 77% either disagreed or had a neutral opinion.

Going forward, the process will require all managers that manage a home worker to attend a compulsory one day workshop on how to manage flexible workers. This workshop will be facilitated by a professional trainer and include how to manage communications, performance and maintain career progressions etc.

Staff opting for home working will also be required to attend preparation workshops, which will cover similar topics.

Career development remains part of the formal performance appraisal process, which every home-worker must receive annually.



Haringey Council

p3	3. Corporate Procurement: Can the Lead Member provide information regarding the rail travel pilot?	<p>This pilot relates to purchasing of rail travel on line and the local printing of rail travel tickets. This new service has been piloted in C&amp;YPS and has eliminated the need for the use of travel warrants for staff and clients.</p> <p>The contract was awarded to Redfern Travel through the Office of Government Commerce Framework (OGC) Agreement.</p> <p>This service will streamline the purchasing of rail travel across the council removing the need for travel warrants to be written off and for staff expenses to be processed.</p> <p>There are a number of benefits to the new service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better use of staff time</li><li>• One point of contact for all purchasing and refunds</li><li>• Staff/Clients travelling are able to pick times of trains.</li><li>• Staff /Client are able to reserve seats on the trains.</li><li>• Staff /Client are able to book tickets in advance and therefore pay less.</li><li>• Finance staff are able to choose and advise on cheap day returns</li><li>• No longer need to use travel warrants at a cost of £10.a book</li><li>• Management information on staff and client travel patterns.</li></ul> <p>In the 2 months the pilot has been running spend on rail travel in the pilot area is 12% lower than in the previous year,</p>
----	---	---



Haringey Council

		indications are that savings can be made. If the pilot is successful it is intended to roll it out to other departments.												
p3	4. Corporate Property Services: Do the Council have any buildings that are non-compliant?	All Council buildings comply with statutory requirements and management arrangements are in place to address failures as they arise. Programmes are in place to improve buildings beyond statutory compliance to ensure they remain fit for purpose.												
p6	5. Consultants: Can the Lead Member provide a “breakdown” of the areas the Consultants are being used in?	<p>I have reviewed the use of consultants across the Council. A business case has been required of each instance of consultant use. The Cabinet Member is to be consulted on all current and future consultant use. There are 59 consultants engaged with the Council at present. This number includes 28 consultants dedicated to the Building Schools for the Future programme. The consultants are engaged as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Urban Environment</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Children’s Service</td> <td>10 (+28 BSF)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Corporate Resources</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PPP&amp;C</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ACCS</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P&amp;OD</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>	Urban Environment	8	Children’s Service	10 (+28 BSF)	Corporate Resources	7	PPP&C	2	ACCS	3	P&OD	1
Urban Environment	8													
Children’s Service	10 (+28 BSF)													
Corporate Resources	7													
PPP&C	2													
ACCS	3													
P&OD	1													
	6. Following the endorsement by the Leader of the O&S contribution and work will the Cabinet Member identify ways in which the Committee can be more effectively involved in a strategic manner, particularly in the Budget Scrutiny?	<p>Following the post budget scrutiny review recently there are a number of improvements officers are taking on board in this years process. These can be summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutinising the council’s medium term financial strategy including financial and corporate planning and the national and local issues that may impact on it, as well as the level of risk involved and how it will be managed.</li> </ul>												



**Haringey Council**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging and seeking to influence how the budget is constructed and commenting on how well it matches the council's priorities.</li> <li>• Undertaking reviews of reported significant variances from budget as required.</li> <li>• Undertaking some evaluation of performance and value for money.</li> </ul> <p>Robust budget scrutiny should therefore:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feature on outcomes rather than inputs.</li> <li>• Measure the effectiveness or impact of its resource allocation decisions and spending.</li> <li>• Monitor performance against financial targets and indicators having regard to the council's medium term forecasts and situation.</li> <li>• Consider how well integrated service and corporate planning is with financial planning.</li> </ul> <p>The overall process is kept under review and we will always consider suggestions for improvement to build into future years.</p>
	<p>7. Can the Lead Member identify particular concerns he has in (1) Setting next year's Budget?</p>	<p>The existing medium term financial strategy is soundly based and provides additional investment in Council priorities whilst delivering significant levels of efficiency savings (£30m). The strategy reflects the policy aspirations of the administration to achieve its service priorities whilst at the same time maintaining our commitment to low council tax increases.</p>



**Haringey Council**

		<p>The financial and business plans will be reviewed as we roll the strategy forward a further year and we have set a further savings target of £7.6m. Officers will be working on options for Members to consider in the budget process.</p> <p>I do not have any particular concerns at this stage, however, there are a number of financial risks and issues, many of them external factors over which we have little control, and these are highlighted in the financial planning report that went to Cabinet on 15 July. Clearly we will need to closely monitor these issues and take a view when we consider the overall budget package in January.</p> <p>Some of the areas of risk highlighted in the financial planning report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inflation, both pay and other prices;</li> <li>• demand led budget areas such as social care;</li> <li>• waste disposal cost increases, both short term and long term;</li> <li>• temporary accommodation subsidy changes, and;</li> <li>• impact of downturn in economic conditions (e.g. land charges income, higher volumes of housing benefit cases etc.).</li> </ul>
	<p><b>From Councillor Winskill:</b></p>	
<p>1 Benefits and Local</p>	<p>8. Following the 6.5% rise in council house rents, OSC urged a housing Benefits take up campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you aware of any such campaign</li> </ul>	<p>Benefits and Local Taxation (BLT) are working closely with Homes for Haringey to encourage benefit take up. The Homes for Haringey Tenants Event took place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June</p>



**Haringey Council**

<p>taxation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the initiative with CYPS include Housing benefit.</li> </ul> <p>Will figures be made available on the success of the campaign?</p>	<p>at the Civic Centre and BLT were represented at the event. BLT sent along two staff to provide advice and assistance on claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, as well as offering general Welfare Benefit entitlement checks via the “www.entitledto.co.uk” website. The event was very successful, with our staff offering advice and assistance to many residents throughout the day.</p> <p>We will also be placing ‘benefit take up’ promotional adverts in the HfH magazine ‘Homezone’.</p> <p>The initiative with CYPS in the schools is a joined up event to inform parents of a range of Council services that are on offer to them, but the key focus will be on Housing Benefit and general Welfare Benefit advice and take up. BLT staff will be available on these days and will be equipped with the latest mobile assessment technology, and cameras to record evidence. Real time benefit assessments will be performed on the day where possible (if supporting evidence is provided). Otherwise an estimated calculation will be performed and the client informed of possible entitlement</p> <p>Currently there are 13 take up events already programmed with further events currently being considered. Figures on how much benefit has been awarded or advised to be claimed will be made available for all campaigns in order that we monitor and report the success rates of each campaign.</p>
<p>1 London Auth. Mut</p>	<p>9. Following an April court judgement that cast doubt on the powers of local authorities to establish a mutual insurance company, would Cllr Adje please update us on the current legal</p>	<p>The judgement in the case against Brent stated that, although Brent had breached Public Procurement Regulations, existing contracts with LAML were valid and authorities who had</p>



**Haringey Council**

	<p>position.</p>	<p>purchased insurance via LAML could continue to operate using these contracts until their expiration. LAML has been given leave to appeal the judgements against Brent, which is ongoing at present. Haringey is working with LAML and all other members of LAML to ensure that appropriate actions are being taken to ensure continuity of insurance cover and appropriate contingency plans are in place depending on the outcome of the appeals.</p> <p>Since the judgement has been delivered, the remaining members of LAML have all been issued with proceedings by RMP. The proceedings state RMP's intention to take action against individual authorities on the grounds of a breach of statutory duty in relation to the Public Contract Regulations 2006. However RMP, LAML and the LAML members involved have agreed to formally put the cases on hold until the outcome of the appeal proceedings against the original judgement is known. The Council will review the position as and when the results of the appeal proceedings are known.</p>
<p>2 Partnerships with RSLs</p>	<p>10.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an intention to wheel out this initiative to all RSLs operating in Haringey?</li> <li>• Is there an agreed timescale?</li> </ul>	<p>It is the intention to roll out the verification partnership to all of the large RSL's in Haringey.</p> <p>Currently we do not have a timescale for further roll out. An evaluation of the success of this project is intended to take place in October and decisions on how to proceed further will be made in conjunction with the outcomes of the evaluation.</p>
<p>2 Home-working</p>	<p>11. Have there been any additional one off or recurring costs for BLT: have there been any savings?</p>	<p>To set-up the home-working pilot, a one-off expenditure of £16,400 was incurred. This cost was to purchase the equipment to enable staff to be able to work from home and represents the costs for a 12 month period for 19 officers.</p>





Haringey Council

		<p>There is a recurring monthly cost for broadband supply, which in the near future would be off-set through release of accommodation floor space. The accommodation savings will be made as staff will desk-share on their day in the office.</p> <p>With regards to non financial savings, the BLT pilot confirmed that performance increased on average by 10-15% and sickness absence reduced significantly. For the six month home working period, sickness averaged 2 days per officer, whereas the period directly preceding this was 11 days per officer.</p>
2 Home-working	12. There is a very substantial difference in the average sick leave taken between office and home-based workers (11 and 2 days); could Cllr Adje account for this.	<p>BLT managers continue to be robust in their actions taken to combat sickness absence in the service. The robust action includes ensuring that 'return to work' interviews are undertaken promptly and formal action is taken where appropriate at the correct trigger points. BLT have been working with our HR Business Partner on a sickness reduction action plan and we have seen a constant improvement in sickness absence levels over the last six months.</p> <p>In the home working pilot evaluation workshops, pilot staff identified that they felt able to continue working from home even though they were feeling unwell. Staff commented that, had they been office based, on some occasions they may not have been able to travel into work when feeling unwell. Staff identified that the journey into work and having to work in a large office in close proximity to other staff were contributory factors to why they may not attend the office when feeling unwell, but felt able to continue to work at home.</p>



**Haringey Council**

		<p>Secondly, a general feeling of 'well being' through enhanced work/life balance opportunities, and the reduction in stress levels were also identified as factors contributing to the reduction in sickness absence for home workers.</p>
<p>3 Corpt Procurement</p>	<p>13.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With severe economic weather on the horizon, what steps will Procurement take to ensure that as much Council spending as appropriate goes to Haringey based businesses?</li> </ul>	<p>The Public Contract Regulations 2006 require Councils to advertise and award contracts that ensure transparency, fairness and competition across the European Community. To award contracts based on locality alone would be deemed illegal. Councils also have a duty to secure Best Value in the spending of public money.</p> <p>However, Haringey's Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) has developed and published a series of workbooks on the Haringey website for use by SME's when planning to tender for contracts. CPU also maintains a database of over 1,000 local businesses whom we alert when a contract has been advertised. .</p> <p>CPU often run "meet the buyer" events when-ever a new opportunity arises so that potential bidders (many of whom are local) have the chance to come along to listen and ask questions of Council officers, prior to competition.</p> <p>It is also possible to package contracts into "lots" in order to make these accessible to smaller businesses but having regard for our legal obligations in regards to best value and value for money.</p> <p>CPU is currently in the process of developing a link between the newly implemented contract management system and the Haringey website such that contracts that are due for renewal within the next 18 months will be published and thus provide an early alert to any supplier. .</p>



**Haringey Council**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many services or items have only one preferred supplier identified by corporate procurement?</li> </ul>	<p>Haringey Council spends approx £400m pa across 400 main types of spend. We currently have around 5,000 active commercial vendors.</p> <p>Within those 400 main types of spend there are 53 that have only one supplier.</p>
3 Key disposal of sites	<p>14.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please provide a commentary on the medium term future of the Hornsey Central Depot site project against a virtual collapse in the number of new starts of houses in London.</li> <li>Has the decision to close the recycling facility at Hornsey been reviewed and will flexibility be applied in the decision to buy a new site?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As this is a mixed use scheme comprising of retail, private and affordable housing it is hoped that the impact arising from the changing economic conditions will be less than if it was solely private housing. Negotiations with the partners are at an advanced stage and this includes a review of the valuations and phasing to mitigate the effects.</li> <li>Relocation of the recycling facility is required to enable the depot site to be developed and plans are progressing to secure a long term permanent solution for this important service. With full consideration being given to the service requirements.</li> </ul>
3 Income generation	<p>15. What effect has the slow down in the economy had on Legal Services' income from property searches?</p>	<p>This question relates to the Legal Service whose portfolio holder is the Leader of the Council.</p>
	<p><b>From Councillor Bull:</b></p>	
p1	<p>16. While the strategy to target benefit take-up through child poverty is encouraging, has the Cabinet Member got a breakdown of poverty amongst ethnicity and age groups? If so, what steps is he taking to extend the strategy to address pensioner poverty and poverty amongst those where English is not the first language?</p>	<p>BLT are not currently aware of a specific breakdown of levels of poverty amongst differing groups in Haringey, however it is nationally recognised that poverty will be greatest amongst pensioners, minority ethnic communities (especially where English is not the first language) and those with children.</p>



**Haringey Council**

		<p>The campaigns which have been planned so far, will focus on these groups. We aim to have Pension Service representatives available at some of the campaigns &amp; the Pension Service are keen to forge links with all Haringey Services working with older people, plus voluntary sector groups such as Age Concern.</p> <p>BLT have a partnership working agreement with The Pensions Service and we have supplied them with lists of people in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit who are approaching pensionable age, so that they can be targeted for Pension Credit campaigns.</p> <p>Some Haringey events will focus on minority ethnic communities – two are currently fixed to run - one aimed at New EU migrants, another for elderly Greek &amp; Turkish residents.</p> <p>Further events focussing on other local communities are in planning for the latter part of this year.</p>
	<p>17. Cllr Adje will be aware of my prolonged interest in the small pieces of land dotted around the Borough that are overgrown or simply not being used, will he update the Committee on whether any steps have been taken to audit such land and whether a strategy is in place to either bring the land back into use or to sell it?</p>	<p>Following the HRA Land Audit carried out in 2005/06 the focus has been on identifying surplus HRA land for possible housing sites, the larger of which have been considered for disposal by delegated authority or Cabinet.</p> <p>The sites identified in the HRA audit are routinely reviewed with Housing. In respect of other land the Council has a general five year rolling programme where all but de-minimus land is inspected for use, boundary encroachments and then re-valued. When under used land or problems with title or encroachment are found they are discussed with the holding</p>



**Haringey** Council

		service.  No list is kept as the issues are resolved as and when they are discovered
	<b>From Councillor Aitken:</b>	
Page 4 (Resources Portfolio update)	18. With regard to future financial planning can the Cabinet Member for Resources state what the Council's Reserves will be for the next two years and for comparison what are this years and the last three years reserves?	General balances of £8m for the end of 2008/09 going up to £13m by the end of 2009/10 and back down to £11m at the end of 2010/11. This is in line with the approved reserves policy and a target level of £10m. For the last three years the general reserve has been steady at £12m.