

APPENDIX: JOINT MEETING OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, 24  
JANUARY 2013, ANSWERS TO MEMBER QUESTIONS ON THE COUNCIL'S  
FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Questions were asked by Members on the areas shown below and answers were given by officers or Cabinet Members as follows:

1. Details on Corporate Contingency Fund and service revenue underspends – It was not possible to give any figures on these at this stage.
2. Why Havering remained continued to be in the highest floor damping band – There had been no clarity received on this from central government and it could not be established how these figures had been arrived at.
3. Details of funding received via the Early Years Support Grant – While it had been confirmed what the level of the top slice would be, it was not known what level of funding would come back to the Council. Some information had recently been received re how much adoption funding would come back to the Council but there remained a lack of specific details.
4. How many primary schools were planning to convert to academy status – No other primary schools were planning to convert at this stage.
5. Public health supplementary paper – This would be included in the February Cabinet report.
6. Savings from review of adult social care – The savings proposed took account of any underspend in other areas of adult social care.
7. Main savings areas proposed for adult social care – These were still being worked through and would cover a variety of areas. Savings would however be in back office functions, not front line services.
8. Impact on children's placements – Provision would be made for the rising numbers of cases. Costs could also be reduced by undertaking more work with families in order to reduce the need for placements.
9. Amount of section 106 receipts – This was not known at this stage and details would be supplied to Councillor Hawthorn outside of the meeting.
10. Predicted underspends – The contingency did not include the forecast overall underspend of £1.2 million. Contingency totals would not be declared until closer to the year end. Officers were very pleased with the catering

underspend which would be used to offset against overspends elsewhere. This was a regular surplus but could not be written permanently into the underlying budget as there was a possibility that the service could lose catering contracts in the future. It was felt it may not be productive for the service to take on many further contracts in addition to those it currently held.

11. Underspend on Special Corporate Budget Provision – Some risk factors had not been applied as yet and so there had only been one-off calls on this provision thus far.
12. Shortfall in income from advertising hoardings – Some income was obtained from sites such as those at the top of North Street and roundabouts. The recession had meant it was not viable to introduce any more sites and there had not been any impact on this from the Olympic Games. Details of income from the existing hoardings would be supplied to Councillor Barrett outside of the meeting.
13. Transfer of outside catering company staff into Havering pension scheme – The legal requirements of an outsourced contract meant that any current staff in the Local Government Pension Scheme had to be admitted to the Havering scheme.
14. Details of the New Homes Bonus – All funds received for this would be spent on the local community on services that residents wished to be improved. This was reflected in the budget. The New Homes Bonus was unringfenced and all residents had been consulted on the proposals being taken forward.
15. Commissioning of specialist advisors – Advisors of this kind were not employed by the Council. The advisor working in connection with the New Homes Bonus was aiming to get empty properties back into use as soon as possible. This was a specialist resource to purely undertake this role and had been carried out effectively in other boroughs.
16. Savings in Members Allowances 2014/15 – The Leader felt that a realignment of Cabinet posts and Overview & Scrutiny Committees was required although the position after the 2014 election would be a matter for the Leader at that time. A Cabinet Member dealing solely with children's issues may not be required once the plans for academies and free schools had concluded.
17. Your Council Your Say survey – The main questions in the survey were the same in order to allow for benchmarking. Some new questions could also be added.

18. Use of recession funding grant – This was used to support payment of additional claims for Council Tax and Housing Benefit.
19. Removal of Learning Disability and Health Reform Grant – There were no specific plans to change spending on this area. The current service plan would continue. Services provided would be assessed by social workers and carers' groups would also be consulted. Services to support people with high level needs were also continuing to be planned for.
20. Social Fund Localisation – Scrutiny of this would fall under the Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was hoped that voluntary or community groups would administer a scheme offering help in kind up to a level of £100. This was a very new area and it was hard to know the exact Social Fund amounts at present. As such, a contingency may be needed. A smaller scheme was in existence in Mawneys ward whereby vouchers for a voluntary food bank could be issued to people.
21. Youth Offending Team – This funding had been removed as some services were now administered by the Youth Justice Board.
22. Social Work Improvement Team – This funding, to cover training for staff, had been now been withdrawn by central Government. Training remained a priority for the directorate however.
23. Troubled Families – While this grant had now been withdrawn, some funding would come to the council as payment by results claims were submitted.
24. Culture & Leisure Savings – The predicted income increase from football pitches was due to the opening of more pitches rather than any plans to increase prices. Officers would confirm to Councillor Darvill the position as regards the pitches at the rear of the Albermarle Youth Centre. Income from Hornchurch Country Park was due to payments for cows being allowed to graze in the park. It was not expected that there would be complaints as a result of cow excrement due to the large size of the park. Officers would check re any current income from cows already grazing in the park. The reduction in cleaning costs would not result in dangerous glass etc being left in parks. There would be no impact of the removal of the car allowance for Parks Protection officers as staff would use Council vehicles.
25. Children's Services – Management & Administration Savings – These would result from restructures of the service following a series of reviews over the last six months.

26. Capital Expenditure – A Member welcomed the presentation of details of capital programme expenditure and requested that this format be followed to allow monitoring of savings throughout the year.

27. Corporate Plan Refresh – A Member requested that this be printed in a bigger typeface or in colour.