

Joint (all) Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 28 July 2011

APPENDIX : QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL SAVINGS PROPOSALS LISTED IN APPENDIX 4 OF CABINET REPORT, 13 JULY 2011

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY
CULTURE AND LEISURE

Item 1: Five a side centre – Could the project plan for this centre be made available?

It was confirmed that the project plan was a public document and could be supplied to Members.

Item 3: Arts Service – Will services be reduced at Fairkytes or prices raised?

The savings would be achieved through better marketing and increased partnership working. Councillor White felt that the savings could be achieved and officers had a clear idea of where these savings would come from. Prospective partners for the Arts Service were Havering Music School and the Queen's Theatre.

It was confirmed that the Council remained committed to opening a new library in Harold Hill with a delivery date of 12-18 months.

Item 4: Community Halls

Could further details be given of the revised management arrangements?

Offices advised that a report on community halls would be presented to Cabinet in September including the amount of repairs needed and options for achieving the identified savings. A consultation paper would be released in the next 3-4 months and it was confirmed that Members could also receive this.

Item 5: Hornchurch Stadium – What would be the impact of the revised management arrangements on users of the stadium?

There were many issues to be worked through with this saving and the precise impact on users was therefore uncertain at this stage.

Item 6: Westland Temporary Camping Site – Could further details be given of the temporary arrangements during the Olympic period?

Councillor White wished to ensure that the Olympic Games were relevant to the people of Havering. Westlands Playing Fields would therefore open as a temporary camping site during the Games period. The plan was supported by St. Edwards School and transport would be provided to and from the camp site. The plans were not subject to the planning process but consultation would be undertaken with St. Edwards School and playing fields users.

Councillor White added that it had recently been announced that more than 300 Chinese journalists would be based in Havering during the Olympic period and a media centre would be set up in Romford.

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The income received from the campsite during the Olympic period would offset the costs involved. It was possible however that the facility could be reopened for a month in the summer in following years. A paper on Travellers in Havering as a whole would be taken at the next Cabinet meeting.

Item 8: Parks commuter parking – Will all people who drive to parks now have to pay for parking?

Most people in fact walked to Havering's parks but Raphael and Lodge Farm parks did suffer from considerable commuter parking and solutions to this had been discussed with residents and ward Councillors.

Officers explained that it was too costly to install barriers that would be lifted after the morning rush hour. There was also the problem of shift workers leaving their cars in the car parks. Officers felt the assessment of income from the policy change was realistic and would supply details to Councillor Barrett.

Is this change detrimental to Havering residents who visit parks?

Councillor White noted that he had visited a park last Sunday which had been very busy but he had not noticed many parking problems. People walked to the park or came by bus or bicycle.

It was proposed to refer item 8 on parks commuter parking to Cabinet for further consideration. This motion was **LOST** by five votes to four. Councillors Deon Burton, Hawthorn, McGeary and Morgon voted in favour of the motion; Councillors Brice-Thompson, Dervish, Misir, Osborne and Wells voted against.

Item 9: Countryside paths – Could more detail be provided for this saving?

Work would be transferred to the grounds maintenance DSO and countryside rangers which would be more efficient.

Item 10: Libraries – What is the current total libraries expenditure?

Councillor Ramsey indicated this was in the region of £1.5 million and officers would supply the precise figures.

REGENERATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Item 14: Management Restructure of Community Functions – Could more detail be given on this?

It was proposed to merge the corporate policy and community safety sections but it was not possible to give further details at this stage due to the impact on individual staff.

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Item 15: Efficiency in spending grants budget – How many grants were given out in Havering?

Approximately £250,000 of social services grants were allocated with further grants from corporate policy and communications. Officers would supply full details.

STREETCARE

Item 17: Savings on environmental maintenance – Will these changes remove the demarcation between workmen?

Grass cutting used to be a major problem but the establishment of a single team to do the work would overcome this.

Item 19: Parking – Where and when will car park charges be increased?

More pay and display locations were being introduced but the current levels of charges were not changing. The car parks would also be managed in the same way.

Councillor Tucker said that the Council's car park at Tesco in Rainham was barely used and Councillor White invited him to propose any changes to the parking policy. It was accepted that the section 106 agreement in Romford, whereby no operator could charge less than the Council for parking, had led to some inconsistencies in parking charges. Councillor White reiterated that there were no plans to change either the 20p for two hours or 50p for three hours parking charges.

Item 21: Waste Tonnage Reductions – Will extra recycling facilities be introduced?

It was not planned to introduce extra recycling bins. It was planned to reduce waste tonnage by e.g. putting extra controls on recycling sites and ensuring waste was only taken from Havering residents. Councillor White added that there were definitely no plans to reduce the current weekly refuse collection.

HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Item 22: Trading Standards – reorganisation – It was clarified that the proposed £40,000 saving was in addition to the existing saving.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Item 23: Registrars income improvements – Would dances and other events not be held at Langtons?

Clashes were avoided between musical events and weddings etc. The hall at Langtons could be used for small wedding receptions but these could not take place at the same time as other ceremonies. The savings target was achievable due to the introduction of additional income generation services such as the nationality application checking service.

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DIRECTORATE WIDE

Item 24: Could further details be given of the planned efficiency savings?

There was not a detailed savings plan as yet although officers felt that the proposed savings were fully achievable.

SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Item 25: Adult Social Care – Could further details be given of savings planned via renegotiation of the community equipment contract?

A new contract with community equipment suppliers would commence from October 2011. Savings would also be generated from a reduced need to store equipment as this would now be delivered direct to retail outlets.

Item 26: Supporting People – Specific cuts to services had not been decided yet but it was anticipated that there would need to be an overall saving of less than 10%. It would be necessary to review which services had the least impact or value and this would be the subject of a future Cabinet report.

Item 28: Service review – How will more efficient working in preventative services be achieved?

Back office efficiencies at Yew Tree Lodge had been identified and it was likely that further efficiency savings could also be found.

Item 29: Day Opportunity commissioning – Could a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment for this saving be supplied?

This saving related to a stimulation of the market for older people's services and was not therefore suitable for an Equality Impact Assessment as each person's needs were assessed individually. Consultation with services users would be carried out by social workers as part of service users' annual reviews.

Item 30: ASC Commissioning – Domestic Violence – How long does the current contract have to run?

The present contract had 18 months to run and the new tender was for three years with a possible extension of two further years.

Item 31: Reablement performance – What is the cost of new reablement beds?

There was no cost for new reablement beds as these were covered by Government funding via the Department of Health. Total funding, including elements for other purposes, was in excess of £2 million.

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Item 32: Reducing demand – telecare investment – What is the total investment in telecare?

Total figures would be provided by officers. It was noted that some telecare initiatives were provided by Government rather than Council funding.

Item 34: Reducing demand – falls prevention – Should efforts be made to improve Havering's pavements in order to reduce numbers of falls?

The Council was working with many partners on its falls reduction strategy. There were also joint efficiencies with the health sector that could be produced in this area. Members felt that carpets, stairs and other areas could also be looked at in order to reduce falls. A higher level of exercise could also mean that falls caused less harm when they did occur.

Item 35: Reducing demand – Hospital Admissions and Re-admissions – Would the cost of CRB checks and recruiting volunteers be excessive?

The proposed network of volunteers to support users with long term conditions was currently being discussed with voluntary organisations. There was confidence that such a network could be established, at no cost to the Council. Members agreed it was important not to take volunteers for granted.

Item 37: Reducing demand – transition planning – How will the transfer of care from children's to adult services be managed?

There were around 30 transitions from children's to adults care per year and officers were aware of the risks around transition. Work was now undertaken with children's services at an earlier stage and with better planning for young people with long term care packages, more cost effective options could be found.

Officers added that this item should be taken in conjunction with item 55 which dealt with the creation of a specific "transitions team" working with people from the age of 12 to 24. The combined adult and children's directorate allowed for a better, more cost effective transition. It was also clarified that the council was legally required to have a head of children's services.

Item 42: OP Residential Care – Were the Cabinet confident that a £1 million saving over three years would be achieved in this area?

Officers accepted that the savings target was ambitious but money from central Government had allowed the testing of telecare and telehealth which was already having an impact. 49% of people receiving home care reablement required no further support and half of the remaining recipients required less support than under a different route. Less support was also now needed for people who had gone through Royal Jubilee Court. A reduction in spending on residential care from 50% to 40% would have a significant impact on the Council's budget, even with increased investment in prevention. Members felt that regular monitoring of these proposals would be essential.

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Item 43: Adult Social Care Charging – Was there a danger that people would no longer take up services such as meals on wheels if charges were increased?

The meals on wheels service was no longer subsidised but was now selling more meals than previously. Whilst it was possible that things could change once the outcome of the Dilnott report was known, 60% of service users still paid no charge at all.

Children's Services and Learning & Achievement

Item 45: School Improvement Transformation – What would be the impact of academies not taking up services?

Officers advised that this saving related to grant match funding and was not affected by any decisions made by academies.

Item 46: Traded services – What would be the impact of this saving on schools?

This related to removing the Council subsidy on services supporting school improvement but would have no effect on schools themselves. A competitive price and product would still be given to schools. The precise business model was still being worked on and it was too early to say if this would involve any redundancies.

It was proposed to refer item 46 on traded services to Cabinet for consideration. The motion was LOST by six votes to three. Councillors Barrett, Dodin and Murray voted in favour of the motion; Councillors Binion, Bull, Misir, Taylor, Thompson and Trew voted against.

Item 47: Adoption – Would the proposed changes mean fewer adoption panels being held?

It was uncertain at this stage how many panels or meetings would be required. Legal advice would be needed on constituting an adoption panel across three boroughs. The new structure would definitely not delay any child being adopted which would not be cost effective in any case.

Item 48: Information, Advice and Guidance – What discussions have taken place with schools regarding this new model?

Work on this area was at a very early stage. Officers felt that a targeted model would give a more consistent focus. Schools were aware of the proposed model but no discussions had taken place as yet. Legal opinion had not been obtained at this stage. Legal advice could be brought to a future meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee unless the advice made reference to individual staff.

Item 49: Children's Centres – Will these changes lead to any redundancies at the Children's Centres?

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There would be no redundancies as a result of any changes. Children's Centres were central to the prevention strategy although there were efficiencies that could be made in a number of the centres. Provision for disabled children was made in all Children's Centres and one Centre specialised in facilities for disabled children. There was not a role for the voluntary sector in achieving this specific item but a role for voluntary organisations in the management of Children's Centres had not been ruled out in the longer term.

Item 51: Children's Transformation – Could further details be given of this proposed saving?

It was important to focus more on prevention programmes which would also produce financial savings. Officers agreed that these savings would need to be continually monitored, Councillor Rochford added that there would be no effect on child protection, only on prevention strategies.

Item 53: Implications of SEN Green Paper – Will the proposed savings be achieved?

Officers felt that the savings could be achieved although this depended on the progress of the Green Paper. There would be no effect on either the funding or provision of services for children with special educational needs.

Item 55: Re-engineering of transitions process and structure – Could further details be given of the proposed savings?

Work had already started on this transition. A lot of expenditure had previously been incurred due to poor planning or decision making previously. Improvements in this would mean savings were achievable.

DIRECTORATE WIDE

Item 56: Review of Structure – Could examples be given of changes as a result of this review?

Officers explained that there was a need to reflect the service in future and this would require different resources and a different shape of directorate structures. There were many uncertainties that had to be planned for e.g. the findings of the Monroe report.

The combined adults and children's directorate allowed greater scope for integration and this also applied to work with the NHS.

FINANCE & COMMERCE**ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Item 57: Increased staff occupation density of Mercury House – Had negotiations taken place with unions over the introduction of hot desking etc?

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The current overall ratio for the Council was seven desks to ten staff but it was felt that some ratios could be reduced further. The strategy on flexible working had been agreed with the unions. Talks were being held with several potential occupiers of the two vacant floors of Mercury House.

A number of office-based staff did still require an assigned desk although technology was allowing an increasing amount of remote or home working. There was also more use of scanning and electronic devices in order to reduce the amount of paper used.

Item 58: Reduction in building cleaning – How many redundancies would there be as a result of this reduction?

Cleaning in public or communal areas, toilets etc. would be carried out at the same frequency as currently. Work was in progress to ascertain the staff numbers affected but there would be no redundancies of permanent staff as a result of this saving.

Item 60: Re-introduction of school swim transport – Will new 32 seat coaches be purchased for this service?

The aim was to use school transport vehicles during their down time. The service would need to be marketed to schools but officers felt the projected income was achievable.

Item 61: Deletion of post within Transport service – Would this impact on the current service?

This related to the work of a retired postholder. There were now different reporting arrangements and officers felt management of the section could continue in this way in the future.

Item 62: Staff car parking – Why had last year's savings not been achieved?

It had been agreed to put back the new parking system several months after discussions with the unions. This meant the original projected income was not achieved. Officers would supply further details.

Item 63: Reduction in courier service – What would be the impact of this?

The internal courier run would reduce from three to two deliveries per week.

DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING CONTROL

Item 72: Emergency Planning shared services – Could more details be given of these proposals?

It was proposed to share the management of the service with Barking & Dagenham and Waltham Forest. This would start in the post-Olympic period. There would be no staff redundancies involved.

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LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Item 73: Reduced support levels to Mayor – What would be the impact of this?

The Mayor would concentrate more on events within Havering in future and there would therefore be less call on the Deputy Mayor.

Item 77: Reduction in Cabinet Member – Could more details be given of this?

Councillor White explained that, once the Council's transformation programme had completed, there would be no need for a Cabinet member with a transformation portfolio. It was important that Councillors made decisions or put forward proposals, rather than officers.

Item 78: Road Safety – Whilst noting that there was no proposed reduction in school crossing patrols, would there be a reduction in the number of road safety events held?

Officers confirmed there would be no reduction in school crossing patrols. Efforts would be made to retain the existing number of road safety events but some may have to be reduced. It was possible some events could be held jointly with neighbouring boroughs.

Item 79: Committee Services restructure – What was the rationale for this proposal?

Some committees had been abolished recently which had led to some spare capacity in committee services.

Item 80: Members Allowances. Reduction in IT etc. – Could more details be given of this?

The issuing of Members with I-pads would allow the saving of money via less use of paper etc.

Item 81: CCTV Reduced staffing – Would the Council's CCTV network be brought together with that of Homes in Havering?

An options paper on the CCTV service would be brought forward in the autumn. Discussions were also in progress with two other boroughs re sharing CCTV Control rooms.

CORPORATE ITEMS

Item 82: Car pooling/car club – How many vehicles would be needed for the scheme?

Such schemes had worked well in areas such as Croydon but a pilot would be undertaken first to establish the number of vehicles needed. Approximately 20 vehicles were needed for the pilot scheme which would be purchased at a reduced rate from a third party supplier.

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Item 83: Reduction in strategic provisions – How was this saving made up.

The saving was derived principally from provision for the ELWA levy with the rest of the variance put towards carbon trading.

Item 84: Reduction in Senior Management – How would this be achieved?

It was proposed that there be a reduction of 20% in senior management – four senior manager posts being removed out of twenty. Steps would be taken to ensure services could still be run with a reduced senior management. Management levels would need to be increased during the period of change.

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