

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

8.1 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GOHIL TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, HOUSING & GROWTH – COUNCILLOR TUCKWELL:

Can the Cabinet member provide an update on the practical steps the Council has been taking, alongside government, the London Fire Brigade, and the freeholder, to address the building safety issues at Union Park in Cowley - and to give residents the reassurance they need?

8.2 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DENYS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:

The government announced in November 2024, wide reaching reforms to Children's Social Care. Can the Cabinet member provide an update on progress made to date in preparing for these reforms and offer assurance of readiness for 2026?

8.3 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MAKWANA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:

Can the Cabinet member please provide an update on the progress of managing the High Needs budget and how the team are progressing the SEND improvement plan whilst being more financially efficient?

8.4 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR DAVIES TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:

Could the Leader of the Council share his view on what message is sent to residents when Full Council votes unanimously to oppose plans for a 3rd runway at Heathrow and then one member of the opposition, who joined the vote to oppose the expansion, then appears in a promotional video supporting the scheme?

8.5 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SWEETING TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:

The Audit Committee report of 28th August 2025, page 60, provides details, in the Value For Money section, of the weaknesses highlighted with regards to Financial Sustainability and Quality of Council information, with 7 recommendations proposed in the Final 2023/24 Auditor's Annual Report, one of which being: *"that the Council should seek to balance the schools' budget to prevent further growth in its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit.....and that the Council should also perform scenario planning for how it would manage the impact of the current deficit on its financial position when the current statutory override ends."*

Although the Government statutory override has now been extended to March 2028, and although the Council has taken action to reduce annual overspend on DSG to £15M at the end of March 2025, could the Cabinet member, provide details of how the deficit of £65.71M is being addressed, as it is still the highest of any London borough and is still increasing?

8.6 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR PUNJA TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

Can the Cabinet member explain why Grant Thornton were procured for the implementation of the Financial Modernisation Programme in a sole procurement tender, when Cabinet had resolved in February in 2025 that CIPFA would be delivering on financial improvements?

8.7 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SINGH TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

The budget report agreed by Cabinet in July 2025 points the finger at previous Section 151 officers for not remedying the situation. So, will the Cabinet member now be seeking to provide an independent report from Ernst and Young on the reported actual savings against target for the past 15 years, so that this Council has a clearer picture on the state of the Council's finances?

8.8 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GARELICK TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

The Annual Audit report by external auditors, Ernst & Young, page 12, states that *"We have not been able to complete our specific processes to address the risk of mis-statements due to fraud or error, nor were we able to complete all of our audit procedures over the financial statements and are therefore unable to conclude on whether the financial statements are materially misstated as a result of fraud or error."*

When will this Conservative administration be in a position to provide the required information to the independent auditor which would establish whether the issue is either misstated information or actual fraud?

8.9 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GILL TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

Can the Cabinet member provide clarity on the reasons why there is now an adverse variance of £31.5M against the outturn 2024/25, representing an adverse movement of £20.5M from month 10 which is made up of the need to write out a negative reserve of £5.5M, an assessment of the Council's Treasury Approach which has led to an adjustment of £4.5M and an evaluation of the bad debt provision policy which has led to an adverse movement of £4.1M along with £5.1M of previously reported intervention not crystalising, meaning that reserves at the end of the 2024/25 financial year are now a meagre £6.7M which are deemed inadequate by the Section 151 officer?

8.10 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MATHERS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN:

A report on Hillingdon's Youth Offer was presented to the Children, Families and Education Select Committee Meeting of 13th November 2024 which stated that, *"the Transporter buses were an invaluable resource in youth work...and that funding for two new Transporter buses had been secured and that the Fleet Team were*

currently working on the tender process, using a similar specification to that of the London Borough of Barnet Youth bus."

Therefore, could the Cabinet member explain why it has taken multiple attempts by opposition members of the Select Committee in November, January, April and June, plus a Member's Enquiry and a further enquiry through Democratic Services, to establish that the procurement process for delivering the 2 new Transporter buses had only started in late July 2025, with the estimated completion date being as late as June 2026, meaning that certain areas of the borough with limited or no venues to deliver the Youth Offer will, until June 2026, continue to be deprived of this publicly acknowledged "invaluable resource".

8.11 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MAND TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES & PROPERTY - COUNCILLOR BIANCO:

At the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee Meeting of 23rd July 2025, (page 16 refers), it was confirmed that, *"There is still no central register of all known hireable Council spaces and buildings, who is responsible for them, how they are let, or importantly, how they are promoted or if they are promoted at all. It appears that there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of what spaces are available, their potential and strategic management of these spaces."*

Therefore, could the Cabinet member provide the timescale for when this vital and important audit of the Council's spaces and buildings will be completed which would need to show where the responsibility lies for ensuring *all* marketing potentials are explored?

8.12 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BRIDGES TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR EDWARDS:

The Home Office told the Court of Appeal that the rights of people who are in this country illegally outweighed the concerns of British citizens. Does the Leader agree with the Home Secretary, and will her approach determine the actions of this Council?

8.13 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BANERJEE TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

There has been much comment in the national media about the indebtedness of councils and the amount of residents' council tax used to pay the interest on the debt.

Would the Cabinet member please tell me what is our level of borrowing and how we compare with other councils?

8.14 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR NELSON-WEST TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT - COUNCILLOR LAVERY:

Can the Cabinet member explain the rationale behind closing the RAGC to members of the public who also used and enjoyed the garden for a place of sanctuary and peace?

8.15 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BURLES TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION - COUNCILLOR GODDARD:

The Chief Finance Officer's Section 25 Statement clause 21 stated, *"Government will be reluctant to provide exceptional financial support midyear and therefore, were the authority to be in a position where its outgoings were to exceed its income there is a possibility that a s114 Notice would need to be issued"*.

With a forecast opening balance of £6.7M, a £16.4M in-year overspend and a Section 24 notice by external auditors Ernst & Young, the then fragile balanced budget for 2025/26 now looks untenable.

What level of Exceptional Financial Support funding from central Government does the Cabinet member calculate that the Council needs to avoid a Section 114 Notice and what will be the cost to Hillingdon Tax Payers?