



HARROW'S JOURNEY: ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

**Submission for the Municipal Journal Best Achieving
Council of the Year Award 2011**

Harrow's ambition

We have come a long way over the last few years. We were one of the poorest performing councils in London with weak capacity to improve; virtually bankrupt; with a poor organisational culture and were perilously close to becoming London's only one-star authority. We have turned this around through strong leadership, better priority setting, taking calculated risks and embracing innovation. Having already delivered significant savings and service improvements through a robust cost-saving programme, we believe our ambitious 'Better Deal for Residents' transformation programme will continue our impressive improvement journey.

We have already saved £45m over the past three years and increased our reserves from £1.3m to £8.0m. On top of in-year cuts of nearly £6m, we need to deliver a further £62m over the next four years – this is 30% of our controllable budget. However, **we are an organisation that is used to change and saving.** Salami slicing is not an option for us. It only risks doing nothing well. Our transformation programme has already delivered over half of our four-year savings target.

Our submission is a story of improvement, achievement and an ambition to get even better.

Our improvements and achievements

We are **recognised as the most improved council in London and one of the fastest improving nationally**¹, leading the way in areas such as combating anti-social behaviour, personal budgets, services for carers, schools, customer services and recycling. Our performance continues to improve – last year, 73% of indicators were ahead of target and 86% of priority flagship actions achieved². In the last year we have not gone backwards in performance in any service area.

Residents report increased satisfaction with a range of services – an improvement recognised by inspection and assessment processes. The Audit Commission judged us to be one of a small handful of councils nationally to have improved against their new tougher inspection regime - achieving 3-star status for the first time ever³.

We have focused our improvements on three areas of most concern to local residents.

¹ PWC benchmarking figures

² Local performance statistics 2009/10

³ Audit Commission, Oneplace website, December 2009



1 – Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe

Harrow is the **best performing London borough for composting and second best for recycling** approaching 50%⁴ – a significant turnaround for a service that was until recently one of the poorest performers in London. Thanks to our innovative partnership with the police, we are also now **one of London's safest boroughs, contributing less than 2% to London's overall crime rate**⁵.

We have invested in improving our streets, recruiting some 30 extra street sweepers in the main shopping areas and station. A high impact 'envirocrime' team tackles the borough's 'grotspots'. Our new **award-winning waste management system will save us £3.1m** and has won three national awards⁶. Using mobile GPS technology and route-planning software in our refuse fleets we have created a transparent end-to-end waste management system. Harrow is the first council to use this technology. The project reduces the amount sent to landfill by 18.8%, reduces fuel costs by 15% and significantly improves customer satisfaction. This technology now been extended to street cleansing, saving £7m over the next 10 years.

In partnership with police colleagues, we are the **first council nationally to have introduced Smartwater across the borough**. It provides a traceable property-marking system free to every household which links property to their owner. 15,000 households in the borough now have a Smartwater kit. Domestic burglary rates have fallen in those areas by 75%.

We have worked with police partners to introduce a Police Kiosk in Harrow Town Centre and fund a town centre policing team, which has reduced pickpocketing by 50%, shoplifting by 25% and completely eradicated illegal DVD selling. We are the first council in London to progress new policing arrangements, including a joint intelligence unit, single safeguarding portal and co-locating staff in one building which will save some £4m p.a. whilst improving front-line services/policing. We already have a police information point in our one-stop shop.

⁴ Local performance statistics 2009/10, LAPS 2009/10

⁵ Metropolitan Police Service statistics, December 2010

⁶ An E-Government Award 2010, an award at the Professional Planning Forum 2010 and a Guardian National Award in 2010.

2 – United and involved communities: A council that listens and leads

Harrow is proud to be the country's most religiously diverse borough⁷ with an ethnic minority population of 53%⁸. Over 76% of residents believe that Harrow is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well⁹ - representing a 20% increase since 2008.

This was achieved by working closely with the local community in designing and delivering our services, e.g:

- Under One Sky - our largest community festival organised by the Council brings together Harrow's diverse communities and partner organisations. Last summer's event saw over 10,000 residents enjoy a host of exciting activities and carnival atmosphere.
- Neighbourhood Champions (launched in April 2010) – the role of this network of local volunteers is to inform the council about everyday street-level nuisances and to act as our 'eyes and ears'. We have already recruited 1,000 volunteers and aim to have one per street.
- Pride in Harrow days and weeks of action – working with residents and partners, these are a holistic approach to tackling the key issues in neighbourhoods e.g. abandoned vehicles, litter etc with phenomenal improvements in residents' satisfaction.
- Work with the Somali community – a needs assessment, led by our Somali community, identified the requirements of our most disadvantaged, deprived and isolated section of the population enabling them to better integrate into our borough. The work won a Community Partnership Award in 2010.
- Outreach work – our mosques accommodate council community outreach officers. Their work laid the foundations for the exemplary way in which local partners and community groups worked together to handle two far-right demonstrations in late 2009, which was **highlighted as good practice by both the London Mayor and Metropolitan Police Commissioner**.
- Volunteering – we have increased volunteering by re-invigorating our relationship with the voluntary sector. Our Harrow Heroes award celebrates our unsung volunteers. We have set an example by introducing an employee volunteering scheme One-4-One where the Council matches the time an employee gives to volunteering in the borough.



⁷ Focus on Ethnicity and Religion 2006, ONS

⁸ Mid-Year Population Estimate 2007, ONS

⁹ Interim Place Survey 2009/10



We are driven by what our residents and customers tell us. Just four years ago, we had the lowest residents' satisfaction level in London¹⁰ and high levels of dissatisfaction among staff¹¹. Things had to change. Our improvement journey has allowed us to transform the way we deliver services. There has been a 17% improvement in net satisfaction with the Council and residents are now more satisfied with the majority of our services¹² e.g. **tenant satisfaction in housing has risen 14% in the last year and our housing repairs satisfaction has increased 27%**. 96% of our tenants are now satisfied with our Housing major works service.

Our customer contact centre (Access Harrow) recently achieved customer excellence accreditation with over 90% of calls resolved at the first point of contact. We have launched an online citizen account - working in a similar way to online banking, the 'MyHarrow' accounts are tailored for the individual and give residents easier access to information such as Council tax, benefits, business rates and landlord accounts.

Listening to what residents want from local services is central to what we do and how we plan for the future. Our **innovative 'Let's Talk' campaign** finds out what is important to our residents, from roadshows where councillors and senior officers talk face-to-face with residents about their concerns and aspirations for the borough, to the creation of a Facebook page. The feedback has driven our vision and priorities. Better involving residents will be a key part of how the Council does its business in future.

¹⁰ User Satisfaction (BVPI) Survey 2006/07, IPSOS MORI

¹¹ Harrow Council Staff Survey 2005, carried out by the Work Foundation

¹² Interim Place Survey 2009/10, IPSOS MORI



3 - Supporting and protecting people who are most in need

Adult Social Care

For many years, Harrow's adult social care was judged one star with uncertain prospects, one of the worst in the country with poor homecare provision and a failing learning disability service. Stakeholder relationships were difficult and there was a lack of service user involvement. Staff morale was low with high levels of staff sickness.

In 2010, CQC judged us the fastest improving service in London (3-star with elements now deemed outstanding) and the most improving in the country¹³ - a phenomenal turnaround. This has been achieved by strong leadership, a relentless focus on outcomes, innovation and putting user involvement at the heart of all we do. Staff sickness is down 24% in the last year.

The **service is now a leader** in:

- Personalisation – Harrow is the top London borough for enabling users to control their own care with over one in five personal budgets in London provided by the Council. Our work with Shop4Support has won awards for its **groundbreaking online marketplace for social care support**.
- Services for carers – the numbers of carers supported rose from 43% in 2008/09 to 52% in 2009/10 making us the **best in England**¹⁴.
- Engagement – **rated excellent by CQC**, 88% of older people say they are now satisfied with the homecare services they receive¹⁵.
- Reablement – working closely with our health colleagues, we lead the way in reablement saving £1.5m p.a. and ensuring that more people are supported to live independently in their own homes.

¹³ Care Quality Commission, Annual Performance Assessment, November 2010

¹⁴ ADASS Putting People First Survey 2009

¹⁵ Harrow Adult Social Care Survey 2009, IPSOS MORI

Children's Services

Our Children's Services are rated 3 by Ofsted, with a number of major achievements:

- **85% of our schools are rated as good or outstanding.**
- 73% of schools inspected since September 2009 have been judged outstanding, contrasting with 9% nationally - one of the best performances nationally.
- Our GCSE results place us in the top 12 LEAs in the country.
- **100% of Harrow's schools are judged by Ofsted to have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and safeguarding.**
- Harrow has the second lowest number of 16-18year olds not in education, employment or training¹⁶ (NEETs) in the country and this continues to improve despite the economic downturn.

In a recent inspection of our adoptions service¹⁷ Ofsted identified our partnership work with the voluntary agency Coram as outstanding. We **deliver the highest adoption rate in the country**, witnessing a 600% increase in adoption rates 2008-2010, thus improving the life chances of many vulnerable children.

"The Harrow/Coram partnership is a fantastic example of the success that can be achieved through imaginative thinking and innovative practice in drawing on the expertise of the voluntary adoption agency. Local authorities should be looking to examples like Harrow to see how they can improve their own services and help more children find permanent, loving and stable homes. The partnership is so successful that no child in Harrow is currently in care waiting to be adopted."

Children's Minister Tim Loughton, January 2011

We are building on our strong performance platform by now developing a new and innovative integrated one-door model in Children's Services which will provide a more efficient and effective targeted system, putting vulnerable children, young people and families at the heart of our services.



¹⁶ Local performance statistics 2010/11. Upper quartile, 2nd out of 86 authorities in PWC analysis.

¹⁷ Ofsted inspection, November 2010.

Better Deal for Residents – transforming our services

Our change process began five years ago when we signed a transformation partnership with Capita. Since then we have delivered savings of £50m while rapidly improving performance. Our **business partnership with Capita is expected to deliver savings totalling £100m over 10 years.**

In July 2010 **our ambitious and innovative ‘Better Deal for Residents’ transformation programme** was launched. Working with partners, the programme rests on three pillars:

- **Being a more efficient and effective organisation which lives within its means.** Examples of work includes rationalising the public sector/ Council estate; mobile and flexible working; reconfiguration of business support; spans of control; EDRMS/LEAN techniques; better procurement and shared services with other councils amongst many other areas.
- **Joining up and personalising customer services for residents.** Examples of work include improved customer contact (resolution at first point of contact); channel migration; citizen accounts; single assessment process; total place approach to services (e.g. families with complex needs and reablement); personalisation and challenging the way we provide all our services e.g. introducing self-service technology into libraries (saving over £1m p.a.).
- **Building on the community spirit of residents to be more involved in the future of the borough.** Working with Populus we have tried to capitalise on residents’ desire to make a greater contribution (citizenship/ social responsibility) e.g. encouraging residents to transact with the Council using lower cost channels; taking greater responsibility for their local environment (Neighbourhood Champions); taking a greater interest in supporting older neighbours or friends to live at home through our circles of support scheme or looking after local assets such as parks, community halls and encouraging more volunteering.

Our business partner (Capita) has provided much needed additional capacity and capability and transferred much of the delivery risk in our programme. Staff are central to the programme and they have led and contributed to every workstream.



Our staff

A dedicated, committed and hard-working workforce is vital to see through the level of improvements that we have witnessed at Harrow. The Council was not rated highly as a place to work by staff. However, in our last staff survey 84% of questions showed improvements in staff perceptions with a 20% increase in staff who would recommend the Council as a place to work. Morale has improved and sickness absence has fallen by 20% saving some 15,000 man days a year.

Our success has been built on investment in the workforce. We invested in a Management Development Programme, which supported 250 middle managers and 308 frontline staff have achieved NVQs through a local college. This unleashed the talent within the organisation and ensured that we have the capacity and capability to deliver our transformation programme. Harrow was awarded the Member Development Charter in late 2009.

The Council's culture was very traditional and hierarchical. To turn this around, staff led and devised our CREATE values: **C**ustomer First; **R**espect; **E**ngaged communication; **A**ctively 'one council'; **T**aking responsibility; **E**nergise and improve, which underpin all we do. We hold twice-yearly awards to reward staff who have demonstrated the values through their work and we encourage innovation through our staff suggestion scheme 'Innov8'.

The change in administration in May 2010 has increased the momentum, highlighting the quality of member-officer relationships. We are not standing still in Harrow – the status quo is not an option for us. We continue to innovate and improve, work better with our partners, engage our residents and encourage staff to lead the way in improving our offer to residents. These are truly exciting times in Harrow.



Michael Lockwood,
Chief Executive



Councillor Bill Stephenson,
Leader of the Council