Council, Tuesday 8 September 2009

Item 4.2 – Opposition Policy Item: Councillor Jack Cohen

(i)   **Amendment::** Councillor Daniel Thomas

Delete all and insert:

Council notes that other local authorities have begun webcasting meetings at considerable cost. In way of comparison, for the neighbouring Borough of Camden the cost is £38,000 per annum with number of live audience viewings ranging from just 15 to 40 per meeting.

Council believes that the democratic process should be as open as possible, but that methods of communication must be justifiable in terms of reach in relation to cost.

Council therefore asks Cabinet to ensure that public attendance at, and participation in, meetings is encouraged through cost effective means.

Under Standing Order Part 4, Section 1, 31.5: if my item is not dealt with by the end of the meeting I ask that it be voted upon at the Council meeting.

(ii)   **Amendment:** Councillor Alan Schneiderman

Delete all and replace with:

"Council notes that many residents are unable to attend meetings of Council. On the other hand often when there is considerable public interest there is not enough seating available in the public gallery. Other Councils are now beginning to introduce videoing of Council meetings. This provides for both live and archived transmission of meetings. Council also note that the BBC series "The Planners are Coming "contained much footage of the planning sub committee. It is generally recognised that the series enhanced the role and reputation of both Members and Officers.

Council believes that we should optimise all the technology at our disposal to improve our engagement with our residents and beyond.

Council also believes that there are other ways we should promote resident participation in the democratic process, and regrets the lack of any meaningful consultation of local residents by the administration on important changes to local services, as well as the reduction in the number of residents' forums and the curtailing of residents' speaking rights at planning committees.

Council therefore asks Cabinet to develop a strategy for proper consultation of local residents and community engagement including:
- introducing Public Question Time for residents at Council meetings,
- providing live webcams of Council and Committee meetings with the objective of introducing both of these as soon as possible,
- re-instating residents' speaking rights at planning committees,
- ensuring that all scrutiny meetings (including Task and Finish Groups) and meetings of the Local Strategic Partnership are held in public, and
- developing the role of residents' forums to increase attendance by local people in addition to the work being done by the council on social networking."

Under Standing Order Part 4, Section 1, 31.5: if my item is not dealt with by the end of the meeting I ask that it be voted upon at the Council meeting.