

Harrow Monitoring Group

advocating inclusion so everyone can access - and shape - the services they need

[Harrow Monitoring Group](#) - email

PUBLIC

Alex Dewsnapp
Managing Director
London Borough of Harrow
Forward Drive
Harrow
HA3 8LF

24 June 2026

Sent via email Alex.Dewsnap@harrow.gov.uk

Dear Managing Director

Navratri bookings at Byron Hall: questions of governance, transparency and equal opportunity

We are writing regarding concerns that have recently emerged in relation to the allocation and subsequent cancellation of a booking for Navratri 2026 celebrations at Byron Hall, Harrow Leisure Centre.

Whilst the specific dispute has been reported by one of the parties involved, we do not seek to comment on the merits of any individual claim, nor do we expect the Council to comment on any ongoing complaint or legal proceedings. Rather, we are concerned by the broader questions this matter raises regarding fairness, accountability, transparency and the Council's obligations to ensure equality of opportunity in the management of publicly owned facilities.

As you will be aware, Byron Hall is not a private venue. It is a public asset owned by the London Borough of Harrow and operated on the Council's behalf. Decisions concerning access to such facilities must therefore command public confidence and be capable of objective explanation.

The concerns raised by this matter are not about whether any particular organisation should be granted preferential treatment. Navratri is a major Hindu festival and celebrations may legitimately be organised by any organisation that satisfies the applicable criteria for the use of public facilities. In circumstances where competing applications exist, residents would reasonably expect decisions to be made according to transparent, published and consistently applied criteria, free from any perception of favouritism or unequal treatment.

This is particularly important in a borough as diverse as Harrow, where cultural and religious events play an important role in community life. The Council has a responsibility not only to ensure fairness in decision-making but also to avoid circumstances that may inadvertently create tensions, rivalry or perceptions of unequal treatment between community groups.

Against that background, we note that a number of straightforward governance questions arise:

1. What policies govern the allocation of major event bookings at Byron Hall?
2. What distinction exists between provisional bookings and confirmed bookings?
3. Under what circumstances can a confirmed booking be withdrawn, amended or reallocated?
4. Who ultimately holds decision-making authority when disputes arise: the Council, the venue operator, or both acting jointly?
5. Are there published criteria governing the allocation of dates where multiple organisations seek access to the same facility?
6. What obligations exist to provide reasons when a confirmed booking is cancelled?
7. What avenues of review or appeal are available to organisations affected by such decisions?

These questions concern governance rather than any individual dispute. They should not require extensive investigation if clear policies and procedures are already in place.

Can the Council therefore confirm whether there is a published framework governing the allocation and management of major event bookings at Byron Hall and, if so, where it may be inspected by members of the public?

If such a framework exists, it should be straightforward to identify and explain. If it does not, that would inevitably raise questions about the adequacy of the governance arrangements governing a significant public asset owned by the London Borough of Harrow.

Public confidence is strengthened when decisions are taken within a transparent framework, when responsibilities are clearly defined, and when community organisations can understand the rules under which public facilities are allocated. It is weakened when uncertainty exists regarding the criteria applied, the decision-makers involved or the process by which confirmed bookings may be altered.

This matter presents an opportunity for the Council to provide reassurance that robust governance arrangements are in place and that all community organisations are afforded equal opportunities and fair treatment when seeking access to publicly owned facilities.

We would welcome your response.

Best regards

Husain Akhtar
Coordinator
Harrow Monitoring Group

Cc

We are copying this correspondence to the following Members because the issues raised concern not simply an individual booking but the governance of a publicly owned asset.

We would therefore invite councillors to satisfy themselves that appropriate policies, procedures and accountability mechanisms are in place and, where necessary, to consider whether the matter warrants scrutiny through the council's governance or scrutiny processes.

Cllr Marilyn Ashton, deputy leader, London Borough of Harrow

Cllr Janet Mote, community and culture portfolio holder, London Borough of Harrow

Cllr Stephen Greek, performance, communications and customer experience portfolio holder, London Borough of Harrow

Cllr Amir Moshenson, chair overview and scrutiny committee, London Borough of Harrow

Also copied is Richard Brooks, Harrow council strategic director of resources & innovation, as the issues raised touch upon broader questions of governance, accountability, contract management, risk management and the stewardship of council-owned assets.

We would be grateful for his assurance that appropriate governance arrangements, policies and oversight mechanisms are in place and capable of addressing the questions identified in this correspondence.