

Madam Mayor,

There are a number of items that I would like to update members on this evening.

Policing in the borough

I regret that I find it necessary to start my announcements on a negative note. It would seem that as we speak this evening there is in progress a public meeting here in Romford on the future of policing in the borough under proposals set out by the office of the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan for Policing and Crime. The proposals are said to include the closure of Hornchurch and Rainham police stations and of eight Safer Neighbourhood Team Offices.

Residents attending the meeting may wonder why their councillors are not at the meeting doing their job to represent them and the local community interests. Well we are of course here as we are required to be at a full council meeting. I am told that there was no consultation about the date or arrangements for the meeting and that our officers were advised that it was to be held only last week. No mention of the meeting or its subject matter was made at the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny on 29th August or at the last joint project board.

The latest proposals for our borough are part of planned London-wide cuts. However bearing in mind that we have been asked to participate in the pilot scheme project for unified borough command which had at its heart an increase in safer Neighbourhood Teams this is on the face of it for us a remarkable state of affairs. I will therefore be making representations firstly to the Deputy Mayor for Policing to whom I am to speak on Friday of this week and then in writing to the London Mayor. I shall request from him an explanation how this situation has been allowed to occur and what has happened to the balance of Olympic Levy which was withheld from our council tax payers on the basis that the extra money would be allocated to the police.

I am sure that we wish to give the strongest possible support to our valued police officers working here in the borough. They have a right to expect adequate organisation and facilities to undertake their onerous task of safeguarding our communities. We also as the democratically elected representatives of 250,000 people should be enabled to fulfil our roles in this matter.

Of course, with the population in North East London increasing and the borough being expected to sustain even higher growth, policing is also of crucial importance. Which is why the recent figures for police response times in the borough has been very disappointing. Not to mention the MPS consultation on plans to close public access points across the borough to which I have referred.

It would come as no surprise if members were now to question the value of any further involvement in the 3-borough pilot and to demand a re-think on the whole proposal. We shall clearly need to give this immediate consideration.

Local Plan and infrastructure needs

As you know, we have been consulting on the draft Local Plan. The consultation on which closes on 29 September. The Local Plan is extremely important and outlines the future development of the borough for the next 15 years. Havering is part of one of the growing areas of London. With our adjoining boroughs regeneration and housing commitments will see further growth over the coming decades. Because of this we need to work with partners and government departments, including the

NHS, to ensure we have the right infrastructure, so that residents can access what they need when they need it.

As such, I feel increasingly strongly that a strategic review of the NHS' plans to close King George's A&E department is now essential. We have already raised serious concerns with the Barking, Havering and Redbridge Clinical Commissioning Group.

Whilst recognising the financial constraints, we want to support the NHS to look again at their now out-of-date planning assumptions around the closure of King George's A&E department.

A review is critical to ensure that the NHS plans for the future needs of residents in Havering and North-East London as they are now known to be and not 7 years ago. This should include reviewing current and future capacity of, not only A&E emergency care, but also GP services and other valued NHS amenities – particularly those that help take the pressure of our busy A&E Departments – such as walk-in-centres and urgent care centres. Our residents deserve nothing less than world class health services, in the right place, at the right time - that provide quality and clinically safe services. I have written to the Secretary of State calling for such a review.

If we are expected to accommodate increased numbers of residents it is surely reasonable that adequate health resources follow that commitment whatever may be the demands of austerity.

Mayor's Draft Transport Strategy

In line with this, we are also responding to the Mayor of London's Draft Transport Strategy, which aims to reduce the need to use cars in London so that by 2041, 80 per cent of all Londoners' trips will be made on foot, by cycle or by public transport.

The draft strategy does not in my view recognise the needs of outer London boroughs such as our own and for us, in particular, it does not recognise that we have an elderly population, many of whom rely on their cars to get around the borough.

In addition, it does not include the key strategic transport infrastructure needed to support the expected future growth in the borough, the need to improve connections between the north and south of the borough, or tackle traffic management issues at Gallows Corner

We are strongly urging the London Mayor to reconsider his priorities.

Rough sleeping and begging

Now moving to Romford Town Centre. Members may have observed an increase in rough sleeping. It is important to highlight that not all who are seen to be sleeping rough are willing to accept help. And while some are genuinely homeless, some individuals carry out anti-social behaviour, including organised begging and street drinking.

Over the last year, we have worked with police to tackle this, and issued three Community Behaviour Orders and 13 Community Protection Notices.

Officers are also working with local off-licences to discourage them from selling alcohol to known street drinkers and have been consulting on a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to combat street drinking. This order will replace the current Designated Drinking Area in Romford which prohibits

anyone drinking of alcohol within the ring road in Romford, which ends in October. This is scheduled to come to the next Cabinet meeting.

Orchard Village

Many of you will be aware that I met with a group of residents and Clarion Housing in July to discuss the many concerns that residents of Orchard Village have been raising for some time. The meeting was welcomed by residents and it was useful in creating an effective dialogue with all involved. However, it was not possible to cover all the issues on that day. Therefore, I am in the process of convening another follow-up meeting and will update you on the outcomes of this is due course.

It should be noted however that in view of pending legal action there may well be restraints on making as much progress as would otherwise be possible.

A-Level and GCSE results

Moving on to education. Last month saw thousands of young people across the borough receive their GCSE and A-Level results. A-Level results exceeded the national rate, with Havering students achieving a 99% pass rate. And this year, we saw GCSE results in the new 1-9 grading system – with Havering's results (67%) slightly above the national average. These results show sound progress in achievement which is one of the cornerstones of our school improvement programme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all teachers and education staff for their continued dedication and efforts to support students across the borough.

Ofsted update

While on the topic of education, I would like to provide an update about our Children's Services Ofsted inspection last year. An improvement plan was formally submitted to Ofsted in the spring, and another visit is scheduled to take place next month to discuss the progress that has been made. Among many things, improvements have been made to streamline processes in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), to increase engagement with care leavers, to increase the proportion of permanent social care staff recruited by 20 per cent, to develop our existing workforce, and to improve the way that management information is recorded.

I will continue to update you on progress made in this important area.

Record number of green flags

Since our last meeting, we have had news that a record 13 parks in the borough now have Green Flag status. Harrow Lodge Park and Haynes Park are the latest to be awarded a Green Flag by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, with the other 11 retaining their Green Flag status. They are: Bedfords, Upminster, Hylands, Lodge Farm, Cottons, Harold Wood, St Andrews, Lawns, Raphael, Central and Rise Parks.

This is well-deserved recognition of all the hard work put in by both the staff and Friends' groups to maintain and improve our parks for the benefit of the community. We know how much quality green spaces matter to residents and visitors, and these awards celebrate the dedication that goes *into* maintaining our parks to such a high standard.

Congratulations are also due to our staff also on the season's floral displays and including the floral crowns marking the Queen's Sapphire Jubilee. The photograph of the one shown on the screen at Langtons in Hornchurch was sent to me by an appreciative resident in my ward. I am told that the crown at Collier Row also attracted a great deal of interest and support.

80th birthday of the Town Hall

On another note, this year marks the 80th birthday of the Town Hall and of the Romford Borough Charter. In September 1937, the Borough Charter was granted by King George VI, and we were given our first Mayor. The Town Hall has seen some interesting things over the years and historical moments in time, and it has of course been recognised as a listed building.

Havering Show

At this point I would like to offer my thanks to all the officers who worked hard to deliver one of the best Havering Shows we have seen. The weather certainly had a part to play, with a record 55,000 people attending over the bank holiday weekend, however, the entire offer was very impressive. I would also like to thank the many sponsors that contribute towards the event – without their support, we would not have been able to deliver it for free yet again.

Mayors and deputies from 12 other councils attended to support you Madam Mayor and were greatly impressed by the event.

I was part of the administration when the Havering Show started 39 years ago, and I have seen it change and grow over the years. I am sure, like me, members will all be looking forward to celebrating its 40th anniversary next year.

For the second year there has been a vox pop recording on an antique double decker bus which itself has been popular with younger visitors.

Havering Show comments

Finally, members may remember, last year at the Havering Show, we asked people questions on the bus about what they liked most about Havering. This year, we asked what people liked most about the Havering Show and what they would like to see change. So I will leave you with this short video.