



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 22 November 2017

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Public Space Protection Orders around School

- 1) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety (Councillor Osman Dervish)**
From Councillor Reg Whitney

The Public Space Protection Order around schools was heralded as the way to deal with illegal and dangerous parking. The current Administration courted huge local and national publicity when the scheme was rolled out to four schools. Would the Cabinet Member confirm what has happened since?

Answer

The PSPO scheme at all four schools continues to address illegal and dangerous parking and further improvement measures are due to be introduced to ensure the current schemes continue to be effective.

A consultation programme was undertaken in June to seek views from the broader community and stakeholders on the PSPO scheme. 400 responses were received with overwhelming support for the schemes to continue because they have been so successful in keeping children safe and reducing disruption outside the schools.

The Strategic Enforcement Board agreed that a PSPO scheme Application Policy for schools be introduced to enable other schools in Havering to be considered and this will be subject to a consultation in due course.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the application process for PSPOs would come forward for consultation in due course and that schools would be able to comment on this.

Assistance for Residents when Universal Credit is Implemented

- 2) **To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White)**
From Councillor Ian de Wulverton

During the trial period people have had to wait long periods of time for payment, causing rent arrears and destitution. Since many residents have private landlords how are we going to manage their housing needs if and when they are evicted and what provisions have the council made to assist residents when universal credit is implemented?

Answer

Any arrears action is automatically put on hold if we are aware that someone has applied for Universal Credit. In the majority of cases we would receive a request from the DWP seeking information on the breakdown of the claimant's housing costs, which prompts us to suspend any arrears actions.

As private tenants will not be in arrears with the council, the Income Team may never know what their situation is. However, we will give advice to anyone who approaches us.

Where we are aware that tenants are affected we assist them by looking at their income and expenditure to see if there are any expenses they can realistically cut and make suggestions to them accordingly.

We will also provide them with additional support and advice, so at the very least they will have guidance to cover the period they are waiting for the Universal Credit to be assessed.

In preparing for the Homelessness Reduction Act, we will pilot an early intervention and prevention approach, so that residents are assisted in sustaining their tenancy.

In addition, we have commissioned the Chartered Institute of Housing to work with us to support our ongoing preparations for Universal Credit.

In response to a supplementary question, the cabinet Member stated that the Council was required to administer Universal Credit in line with Regulations set by Central Government. The Cabinet Member was happy to arrange, if required, a briefing sessions for Members on Universal Credit.

Update on Policing in the Borough

- 3) **To the Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety (Councillor Osman Dervish)**
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Please would the Cabinet Member provide an update about the Tri-borough pilot, closure of stations and SNT bases and the Local Policing Model?

Answer

The new tri-borough pilot went live in January 2017, bringing together Havering, Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham under one Borough Commander. The pathfinder initially had four strands – Emergency Response, Investigations, Safeguarding and Neighbourhoods. A fifth, cross-cutting strand of Headquarters has recently been added.

The change has proven beneficial to social care services, which now benefit from closer joint working with the police.

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Initially Havering suffered a reduction in response times to both emergency and “significant” calls to the police. Response times have now recovered to pre-pilot levels but are not yet quite meeting targets. Regular project oversight meetings continue, attended by the Leader and chief executive. The Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee also monitors response times.

Following a public consultation, MOPAC launched its new Public Access and Engagement Strategy on 1st November. The 24/7 front desk at Romford police station will remain. Havering will also retain the neighbourhood policing base at Tadworth Parade. Despite lobbying by the Council, Hornchurch police station, Rainham police desk and all other neighbourhood policing bases are earmarked for closure. A date for closure has not yet been set and the strategy commits that bases will not be closed until alternative policing hubs are identified.

This is unacceptable and fails to consider the needs of our residents or of our population growth. This is why we are looking at the prospect of a legal challenge.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that work in progress with other Councils was not relevant as this related only to back office services, not to policing.

Parking Meters at Hilldene Shops

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

When will the Parking Meters at Hilldene Shops, Harold Hill be upgraded?

Answer

There are currently no plans to upgrade the Pay & Display machines in the Hilldene area. The machines at this location are operational with the exception of one in Farnham Road.

Plans to repair the machine have not been successful and the machine is soon to be removed. However, the location will still be well-served by alternative Pay & Display machines. In addition, customers are being able to use the Phone & Pay service (Cashless).

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that he would arrange a visit, with officers, to the Hilldene shops area.

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Removal of Dumped Vehicles in Hornchurch Town Centre

- 5) To the Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety, (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor John Wood**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm why the Council removes dumped vehicles from some areas of private land behind shops in Hornchurch Town Centre?

Answer

The Council receives frequent complaints about abandoned vehicles either on the public highway or on private land.

The Council has a duty to remove abandoned vehicles and there is a procedure to follow that involves the land owner.

Abandoned vehicles often attract other types of anti-social behaviour and their prompt removal reduces the impact on local people and businesses.

We have been asked to investigate abandoned vehicles behind shops in Hornchurch Town Centre and this has led to some vehicles being removed under the relevant procedure.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member reiterated that the Council had a duty to remove abandoned vehicles and that land owners would be engaged with where appropriate.

Discharge Targets

- 6) To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services & Health (Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson)
From Councillor Ian de Wulverton**

Is Havering meeting its discharge targets for blocked beds so that we are not going to be hit by a reduction in the Better Care Fund?

Answer

Havering's Better Care Fund Plan which includes the required trajectory for Delayed Transfers of Care (DToC) has been "Approved" as compliant. We understand there are between 24 and 49 authorities that felt unable to commit to such a trajectory in their area. They have been undergoing a period of negotiation and intervention and may be subject to withdrawal of BCF funding; Havering is not one of these.

We have received a letter from the Secretaries of State for Health and for Communities and Local Government to the effect that Havering is not a focus of the review announced by NHS England and the Department of Health for this November.

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Havering has a very strong DToC track record, particularly for the low number of delays attributed to Social Care. In National terms, our performance is in the top quintile.

Details of the review are minimal, but it is expected to be based on September's outturn, as the latest data will be available at that time. Havering has been set a challenging target, however, plans have been put in place for discharges in November. The Director of Adult Social Care is also taking direct responsibility for signing-off any delays.

Re-development of Former Rainham Library Site

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Damian White
From Councillor Michael Deon Burton**

The Council has entered an agreement with Persimmon Homes to redevelop the old library site on Broadway, Rainham. Please would the Cabinet Member explain this agreement and whether evidence was provided they could deliver a quality development opposite listed Rainham Hall and Parish Church in the Rainham Village Conservation Area?

Answer

The Council and an adjoining landowner have entered into a contract with Persimmon Homes to dispose of the old Rainham library and 21 Broadway following the decision to declare the complete site surplus. The contract is conditional upon planning consent being achieved.

I understand that Persimmon has conducted detailed design work and is aware that the development proposals must reflect the scale, materials and design of the existing buildings within the Conservation area and minimise the perceived impact on Rainham Hall and the Church.

The proposed redevelopment scheme has been subject to pre-application discussions and will be determined in accordance with the usual planning processes.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that they Council's planning division could provide advice to developers. There were also insurance schemes that could cover the cost of repairs to any sub-standard works.

Solar Park Project, Dagnam Park

**8) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Barry Muggleston**

In the September Cabinet papers, it is quoted that the Solar Park project in Dagnam Park was effectively abandoned due to Planning issues. Would the Cabinet Member confirm what these planning issues were and how they were not

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picked up at an earlier stage and what changed to make the site near Gerpins Lane unviable so soon after it being put forward?

Answer

The Council's feasibility work into developing solar park proposals recognised that it was not certain that the necessary planning permission(s) would be achieved.

From early on, the Council engaged the community around both sites before it committed to preparing planning applications. The Dagnam Park proposal generated considerable adverse comment.

It also became clear that it was likely the Secretary of State (rather than the Council) would take the final decision on the proposals, and that the community's comments would be an important factor. Evidence suggested that the Secretary of State was likely to refuse the proposals.

The business case for both proposals (including Gerpins Lane) became unviable because of the removal of Government subsidies and the rise in electricity prices.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that it was important to have undertaken proper consultation and investigation work re the Solar Park and its business case. The Cabinet Member would advise Councillor Mugglestone of the exact cost of this work.

Condition of Farringdon Avenue

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety, (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Ian de Wulverton**

When was Farringdon Avenue last resurfaced, who carried out the last assessment of the road condition and when was it carried out?

Answer

I can advise that resurfacing to sections of the carriageway in Farringdon Avenue was carried out in 1994/95, 2007/8 & 2011/12. In respect of the footways, sections of repairs were undertaken on six occasions from 1994 to 2016.

The last carriageway highway safety inspection of Farringdon Avenue was undertaken on 20th October 2017, while the last footway highway safety inspection was carried out on 1st November 2017. These inspections are carried out by the Highways Area Liaison Officers.

The last United Kingdom Pavement Management System Detailed Visual Inspection condition survey of Farringdon Avenue was undertaken in 2015/2016. These inspections are undertaken by a third party contractor (currently Highway Surveyors Limited).

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In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member indicated he would be happy to attend a site visit to inspect the condition of the road.

Removal of Doormats, Pots and Flowers from Public Areas

10) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White) From Councillor David Durant

Will the Cabinet Member for Housing review his decision to order the removal of all doormats, pots and flowers from public areas of our social housing and belatedly ask tenants whether they agree with this over-reaction to the Grenfell disaster?

Answer

We acknowledge the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower and the loss of life is something that nobody wants to see repeated. Whilst the enquiry continues into the disaster, a range of agencies including the London Fire Brigade, DCLG, GLA and London Councils have been working together to provide guidance on measures to reduce risks.

There is invaluable evidence to show that maintaining clear common areas saves lives.

One of the London Fire Brigade's concerns is around clutter in common areas. It is not just about fire risk but also about trip hazards for firefighters. In consultation with the LFB, the Council has a zero tolerance policy on any aspect that could cause a risk, which ensures there is no ambiguity about what is acceptable and what is not.

The recent activity around fire management was to remind all residents of our policy. We re-issued the fire awareness guide, to reinforce vigilance and adherence of policies.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that the safety of tenants was the Council's highest priority and that only a tiny minority of residents did not support the current policy.

New Homes in the Borough

11) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White) From Councillor Ray Morgon

In a speech at July Council, the Cabinet Member for Housing indicated that the 30,000 homes quoted in an explanatory booklet handed to members at a previous council meeting was some kind of artistic licence to hook in developers. An edition of "At the Heart" magazine also quoted that the council was committed to building 30,000, a figure that he said was incorrect, although not corrected in the latest edition of "At the Heart" magazine. Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether council tenants and developers (the most to benefit from increased housing) have been misled by the 30,000 figure or that

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communications from the Council have been poor by providing incorrect information

Answer

The same question was asked by Cllr Morgon at the last Council Questions and the following answer was provided:.

We did publish a copy of the At the Heart which did include in error, reference to the incorrect 30,000 homes figure. Officers would like to apologise for this error.

The above answer which still stands and we would like to apologise once again for this error.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that the Council should be as clear as possible in its communications and ensure that relevant information was made available to tenants.

Allocation of Council Houses

**12) To the Leader of the Council, (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Lawrence Webb**

There has been a great deal of coverage recently about government plans to rehabilitate returning Isis fighters, part of the process being to give them a council house. Can the Leader assure this chamber and indeed the residents of Havering that no returning Jihadis will be granted a council house through the assisted bid system in preference to those already on our lengthy housing waiting list?

Answer

The assessment and allocation of social housing is based on the qualifying criteria housing need requirements as set out in the Housing Allocation Policy. The main criteria underpinning the policy is the six year residency requirement.

The rehabilitation of returning Isis fighters is not a consideration in this process. Therefore any allocation of property through the assisted bidding system is carried out to qualifying residents who are on the waiting list in accordance with the policy.

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Profile of the Borough

13) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Roger Ramsey) From Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Leader of the Council confirm what steps the Council are taking to raise the profile of Havering to attract more interest in our Borough?

Answer

The Council takes a proactive approach to raising the profile of Havering and this is one of the reasons why we have developed a new vision for the borough. 'Havering – Making a Greater London'. This is about embracing the best of what Havering has to offer, and demonstrating how the borough can play an active role in the success of the whole of the region.

Havering has many great features including its award-winning green spaces and its great riverside location. Our proactive communications will continue to make the most of what Havering has to offer including promoting our excellent travel connections. The completion of Crossrail and the introduction of the new Elizabeth line will further raise the borough's profile with high-speed access to central London from three stations in Havering.

The Council uses a full range of communications channels to promote the borough including publications, digital and social media and working with the media to feature the work of the Council. Just recently, the Council was featured in a number of documentaries on BBC1 television including Council House Crack Down and Dom on the Stop, which reaches an audience of up to 20 million viewers.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that regular surveys were undertaken and that people did know where Havering was, particularly those people from the London and Essex areas. A lot of developers were aware of Havering's location, as had been seen by the amount of interest shown in the borough at a recent international property conference.

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The Role of Community Wardens

14) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White) From Councillor June Alexander

Would the Cabinet Member for Housing confirm the role of the Community Wardens, how many incidents that they have dealt with in each of the last five years and how their value for money is assessed?

Answer

The details of activity for the Community Wardens dealing with incidents are as follows:-

2014 – 26,896 incidents

2015 – 21,653 incidents

2016 – 18,996 incidents

2017 to date – 11,528 incidents.

The primary function of the service is to intervene in incidents of anti-social behaviour on the estates and in areas where the Housing Service manages properties. This is done either by being directed to an area or by providing a visible presence. The year on year reduction in incidents is a positive direction of level.

Value for money is measured by assessing the reduction of incidents being attended and residents' satisfaction. Surveys were conducted in 2013, 2015 and 2016 with positive results.

The other measure is to look at is expenditure associated with costs of ASB. A good example of this is graffiti removal. This has fallen year on year.

Should my colleague or any other colleague wish to experience the service I would be very happy for them to have a day with the Community Wardens.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that he did not believe the wardens had any enforcement powers.

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Mayor's Charities

**15) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Nic Dodin**

Would the Leader of the Council confirm when money raised by the Mayor in the last municipal year was paid over to the respective charities?

Answer

The beneficiaries' cheques, totalling in excess of £65,000, were drawn up on 1st November 2017. The final transaction relating to the appeal fund was processed on the 4th August 2017.

Funds can only be released after completion of the audit of accounts. They are then lodged with the Charities Commission.

The internal audit was actioned later than usual this financial year and an apology was issued to the previous Mayor.