



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 24 January 2018

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Machines in Council Owned Car Parks

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

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what a person should do if they arrive at a council owned car park and the machine(s) are "not in use"?

Answer

Information on what to do if a pay and display machine is not working is on the Council website or alternatively a driver can also ring to report a machine being out of order on 01708 432787.

If a machine is not working, then drivers are advised to use an alternative machine within the same location, or where possible, to use the Phone and Pay facility. There is an expectation that customers will use an alternative machine that is situated within the same location which is of a reasonable distance from the broken one. In most car parks, the alternative machine locations are highlighted by "Pay here" signs which are located above every payment facility.

In the event of a machine breakdown the Civil Enforcement team will apply a degree of reasonableness in their enforcement activity and will not enforce the immediate vicinity.

All machine faults and or breakdowns are centrally logged and therefore referred to in the event of a Penalty Charge Notice appeal being received.

I have been informed by the Assistant Director for Environment that less than 7% of the 223 machines across the borough currently have faults and the vast majority of faults raised in any given day are resolved on that same day.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member indicated that he was happy to consider any specific examples of residents whose parking appeal had failed with the Council saying that they should have paid the parking charge via the parking app.

Issue of Planning Decisions

- 2) **To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White)**
From Councillor Phil Martin

Does this Council accept that it has a statutory responsibility to endeavour to issue planning decisions 13 weeks after the receipt of a planning application?

Answer

In terms of statutory responsibility, if the Council does not issue a decision on a planning application within 16 weeks (applications with Environmental Statements) 13 weeks (major applications) or 8 weeks (non-major applications), or a longer period agreed with the applicant, of submission of a valid application, then the applicant has a right to submit an appeal against the non-determination of the application. This is known as the statutory period for determination.

The Government has set designation criteria, which means that if Councils decide less than 60% of major development within 13 weeks or 70% of non-major applications then they are at risk of special measures. Havering has set itself a local target of 65% of major applications being decided within the target time, and current performance is at 85%, which considerably exceeds the target.

The Government and local targets recognise that it is not always possible to decide all applications in time, which can be for a variety of reasons including resolving issues arising during the application, negotiating complex planning obligations and waiting for further information from the applicant or statutory consultees.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member indicated he would investigate whether the clause re the level of affordable development on the new ice rink site could be applied to other delayed planning applications and provide a response on this to all Members.

Children in Care

**3) To the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Councillor Robert Benham)
From Councillor Michael Deon Burton**

Freedom of Information replies from 351 councils show that 150 Vietnamese children rescued from traffickers and placed in council care have gone missing since 2015, almost 90 of whom have never been found. It is feared that they could have fallen back into the hands of slave masters. Most of those to have gone missing did so within just two days of being placed into care. Similar concerns about Albanian children have also been raised.

Minded of Baroness Butler-Sloss, chair of the all-party parliamentary group on human trafficking and modern slavery credible beliefs there are far more youngsters at risk. How many children have gone missing after being placed in Havering Council Care since January 1st 2015? Please provide an explanation of Havering Council's specific safeguards which have been put in place to stop this happening.

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Answer

As at November 2017, there were five Vietnamese and five Albanian children in our care, none of whom were reported missing. 214 children in care went missing a total of 743 times in 2015. 163 children went missing 411 times in 2016. 148 children went missing 1,014 times in 2017.

Havering Council has a Coordinator who oversees all missing episodes and ensures correct procedures are followed. Missing children are tracked and an activity report provided to Senior Managers weekly.

An information pack is compiled about each child in care, including a recent photograph. If they go missing, this is shared with the provider, the council (if placed outside Havering) and the local Police Missing Persons Unit. The pack is updated each time they go missing.

Once they are located, a Return Home Interview is completed and used to review their plan. All children who go missing are reviewed by a multi-agency panel which agrees risk reduction measures. If a child goes missing for three days or more, or risks are higher, a joint plan is agreed with the Police.

The National Referral Mechanism is used to identify victims of trafficking or modern slavery and ensure they receive appropriate support.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that the Council's Corporate Parenting role meant that it was responsible for every child in its care and that it took issues such as child sexual exploitation and modern slavery extremely seriously. As a point of information, the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel added that these issues were on the agenda at every meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel which was a cross-party group.

Heating and Hot Water Service Charlbury Crescent Sheltered Accommodation

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

Why was there a long delay in repairing the defect in heating and hot water system at the Charlbury Crescent Sheltered Accommodation recently?

Answer

A problem was initially reported on 3 November 2017, our contractor attended and reinstated the heating system but reported concerns about the longevity of the repair. This was due to the main boiler controls not working in line with external temperature sensors, which needed to be replaced. Unfortunately, due to the age of the system, the replacement part was no longer available. An interim solution was

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put in place allowing the heating running constantly. The contractor then undertook further work to enable the heating system to be turned on and off at set times during the day and night. This work was completed on 18 November 2017.

Further adjustments were made to the system during December 2017, which meant the need to turn the system on and off was no longer required as a control solution had been found. We have had no further reports concerning the heating system since this time and will continue to monitor and adjust the system to suit the needs of residents.

The boilers and associated operating controls have been identified for renewal in the 2018/19 capital investment programme.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that capital resources had been brought forward to replace the heating system. A review of the heating system in sheltered blocks had also been requested and support had been given to residents of Charlbury Crescent when the heating failed.

Performance of Schools in Havering

5) To the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Councillor Robert Benham From Councillor June Alexander)

Havering is now considered to have the 2nd worst Secondary Schools in London. Would the Cabinet Member confirm why has this been allowed to happen and what steps are being taken to remedy this situation?

Answer

This question refers to the London regional Ofsted annual report, published in December. It is worth noting that the Ofsted report recognised that Havering's Early Years and Primary sector had the highest rate of improvement across the region in relation to school inspections judged 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Whilst it was disappointing that the secondary sector did not perform so well on the same measure, there was a big improvement in comparison to 2016. The majority of secondary schools in Havering are Academy schools; as such the local authority is working closely with these schools and the Regional Schools Commissioner, to drive improvements.

A Secondary School Improvement Board was established in 2017, and is focussed on improving the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of Leadership, and the progress outcomes for all pupils. There are already signs of improvement as whilst the overall progress 8 measure is fractionally below the national average, this has improved significantly since 2016. The average attainment 8 score is above the national average, the percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5+ in English and maths is above the national average, and the percentage of pupils being entered for and passing the EBacc is significantly above the national average.

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During the 2016/2017 Academic Year there were 26 inspections. This resulted in an additional 7 schools being judged as Good or Better. As such, in total 85% of providers were judged as Good or Better as at August 2017 up from 76% in August 2016.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that he felt that the Academy policy needed reviewing. The Cabinet Member was pro-choice for type of schools but this was a personal opinion.

**6) To the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Councillor Robert Benham)
From Councillor Ian de Wulverton**

What is Council doing to ensure that every parent is able to send their children for 30 hours free child care in Havering?

Answer

In preparation for the launch of the 30 hour offer last September, the local authority worked with local early years and childcare providers to ensure there was sufficient supply to meet demand. This included extensive consultation with parents and providers, regular briefings for local authority staff and providers, engagement with Early Implementer boroughs to share learning, and identifying premises for new place development or expansion of existing providers.

Workshops were held for providers to support new models of delivery, and to support them in undertaking their own demand assessment and business planning.

Local marketing of the 30 hour offer has been augmented with the national marketing campaign, and the application process was clearly explained to parents. Clear messages and guidance have been given to partners so they are aware of entitlements and when 30 hours will start, including through Children Centre teams, Health visitors, and other frontline staff.

Take up of places is monitored regularly and benchmarked against regional and national performance, which shows that over 1,000 parents across Havering have already accessed the 30 hours offer since its launch.

(No supplementary question asked).

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Tri-Borough Policing Project

**7) To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Jeffery Tucker**

Please provide an update regarding the Executive view of and response to the Tri-borough pilot and police station and safer neighbourhood bases closures

Answer

As reported to the Council in November, the tri-borough policing model has improved collaboration between the police and social care services. After an initial reduction in response times to high priority calls to the police, performance is now better than before the merger and is better in Havering than in the two other boroughs in the East Area. The average response time to emergency calls in Havering is now within target.

Following publication of MOPAC's new Public Access and Engagement Strategy in November, the Council remains alarmed at the planned closure of 11 of Havering's 13 police buildings, and especially about the impact on residents in the south of the borough, who will have to travel up to an hour on public transport to access Romford police station. Having just one publicly accessible police base to serve more than 250,000 residents is unsustainable, particularly considering Havering's demographics. We also remain strongly opposed to plans to replace police contact points with Community Contact Sessions. The Council has now notified MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police Service of its proposed legal challenge of these decisions and, following receipt of their responses and further advice from counsel, continues to consider the situation.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that the cost of a judicial review were estimated to be £50,000 - £100,000 although these monies would be recovered if the Council's legal challenge was successful.

Planning Applications

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

Would the Cabinet Member confirm how many planning applications received between September 2016 to September 2017 have not yet been determined, together with the date of the oldest application?

Answer

102 planning applications received between 1st September 2016 and 31st August 2017 have yet to be determined. The date of the oldest undetermined application received during this period is the 27th September 2016.

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During the same period, the Council issued 2579 planning decisions.

Background Information for Cabinet Member only. Please note, this information will not be included in the public document.

In terms of statutory responsibility, if the Council does not issue a decision on a planning application within 16 weeks (applications with Environmental Statements), 13 weeks (major applications) or 8 weeks (non-major applications), or such longer period agreed with the applicant, of submission of a valid application, then the applicant has a right to submit an appeal against the non-determination of the application. This is known as the statutory period for determination.

The Government has set designation criteria which means that if Councils decide less than 60% of major development within 13 weeks or 70% of non-major applications within 8 weeks, then they are at risk of special measures.

The Government recognise that it is not always possible to decide all applications in time which can be for a variety of reasons including resolving issues arising during the application, negotiating complex planning obligations and waiting for further information from the applicant or statutory consultees.

Our current planning application performance (1st April 2017 to 31st December 2017)

Major Applications Decided in Target (including extensions of time): 86%
Minor Applications Decided in Target (including extensions of time): 83%
Other Applications Decided in Target (including extensions of time): 95%

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member indicated he was happy to provide a briefing to all Members on case management of planning applications and also to investigate any examples of planning application delays if Councillor Morgon could provide these.

Improvements to Brook Street Roundabout

9) To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety, (Councillor Osman Dervish) From Councillor Patricia Rumble

What step is the council taking together with other partner agencies to minimise the disruption to the residents in Woodstock Avenue and Kenilworth Avenue when the proposed improvements to Brook Street Roundabout get underway

Answer

In early 2017 Highways England consulted on scheme options for improving capacity at Junction 28 of the M25. In August, Highways England announced their preferred option, which was to deliver a two-lane loop road connecting north bound traffic on the M25 with the A12 Eastbound in Havering. It should be noted that the A12 in Havering is part of the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) and therefore not under the Council's control.

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Highways England are currently undertaking environmental assessments to help inform the design work for the scheme. Formal statutory consultation on the proposal is not expected to take place until the end of 2018 at the earliest.

The Council made it clear in its formal response to the 2017 consultation that it would like to see further information on the traffic implications on the wider highway network, not only once the scheme is completed, but during the construction phase as well.

The Council also stressed that clear lines of communication to local stakeholders such as residents and businesses will be crucial during the construction phase.

Because Highways England is still working on the environmental assessments, there simply isn't an indication on the potential impacts on the Havering section of the A12 either during construction or in the completed state of the scheme. Officers will keep the matter under review as information becomes available and they will liaise with TfL officers who will also be interested in the impacts on the TLRN.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he was happy to involve residents of Woodstock Avenue in any discussions on the roundabout proposals.

Terms & Conditions Review

10) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Roger Ramsey) **From Councillor David Durant**

Based on 4300 employees, as a result of the review of terms and conditions how many employees, as a percentage, got contractual wage rises and wage cuts, and overall by how much?

Answer

In the July 2017 Governance Committee report, the 4300 people figure related to the headcount number of employees (including schools) who were affected by the proposals at the start of the employee consultation (September 2016). However, because many people have more than one job with the Council (especially in schools) the number of jobs in the Council will always be considerably higher than the headcount number of employees. At the end of the employee consultation there were 5099 jobs being performed by employees across the corporate organisation and in schools. Table 3 of the report shows the impact of the proposals, at that stage, on the contractual pay of those 5099 different jobs as follows:

- 12.9% would see an increase in their contractual pay - the average increase was 4.2%
- 57.0% would see no change in their contractual pay

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- 30.1% would see a decrease in their contractual pay – the average decrease was 4.4%

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that he deplored the use of circularised e-mails by Councillor Durant. The terms and conditions review had brought the Council's practice into line with local government practice elsewhere. The Unions had accepted the revised terms and conditions as had nearly all staff. Councillor Durant's figures had assumed all staff reached the top of their grade which was not the case. The new scheme also protected the Council from inequality schemes and saved the Council £800,000 per year.

Residents' Complaints Procedure

11) To the Cabinet Member for Financial Management, Transformation and IT (Councillor Clarence Barrett) From Councillor Stephanie Nunn

Would the Cabinet Member confirm why residents are still being told that complaints have to be made online only?

Answer

Against a background of significant budgetary constraints, the Council is committed to provide the most cost-effective means of communicating with our customers. While the preferred method of receiving complaints is via an online form, as this is designed to capture as much information as possible to enable officers to carry out a thorough investigation and provide a trackable response to customers, the Council does recognise the Havering demographic and is mindful of the concerns expressed by some members of the public regarding the transition to electronic reporting and have therefore kept open other channels of communication.

For example, complaints can still be made by letter to COMPLAINTS, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford. RM1 3BD or telephone via the Customer Contact Centre on 01708 434343. Alternatively, customers can go to the Public Advice and Service Centre or a library where staff will help them complete a paper copy of the online form.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that members of the public were not being told that complaints could only be made on-line but he was happy to look at any possible incidences of this if Councillor Nunn could provide these.

Land Development in the Borough

12) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White) From Councillor Ian de Wulverton

What is the council doing to enable developers to bring forward developments on derelict land and prevent land banking in the borough?

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Answer

The Council is shortly due to submit its Local Plan for government approval. The draft Local Plan generally prioritises previously developed land for new housing and this should encourage developers to come forward with appropriate development to meet the Council's housing needs including affordable housing.

In relation to land banking, there are currently no effective powers that the Council has to prevent this. Government consulted on this issue as part of the Housing White Paper and may come forward with proposals in the future. This matter has also been raised with local MPs who will discuss this with the Local Government Minister.

(No supplementary question).

Parking Enforcement Officers

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Barry Mugglestone**

Would the Cabinet Member agree that following negative feedback from residents, businesses and reports in the local media, that he should revisit the training, prioritisation and deployment of permanent or temporary Parking Enforcement Officers?

Answer

The primary focus of our parking enforcement team is to act as a deterrent, keep roads free from congestion and safe for all highway users including motorists, pedestrians and public transport users.

The Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are suitably trained in Civil Enforcement legislation and are City & Guilds accredited. You will be pleased to hear that the deployment and training of its officers is continuously reviewed and monitored closely by the service. Resources are deployed dependent on need in areas of high non-compliance and to manage the parking in controlled parking zones in addition to responding to continual customer requests.

Robust enforcement is often required, especially around our schools at drop off and pick up times and also when there is illegal parking occurring which hinders residents and business alike.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member indicated he would investigate the reasons for 64% of appeals being lost and report this back to Councillor Mugglestone.

Reduction of Homelessness in the Borough

14) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White) **From Councillor Barbara Matthews**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm what actions will be taken to reduce the level of homelessness in the borough and will he provide his backing to schemes run by charities to help accommodate those who unfortunately find themselves homeless?

Answer

Nationally there has been a marked increase in the level of homelessness which has been rising since 2011. Havering is seeing the same trend.

I can confirm that the Council is taking effective action to respond to the current homelessness demand in the borough, and the new requirements that will be introduced through the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which comes into effect from 1 April this year. Although the new Act will not 'fix' the major challenges the borough faces in preventing and tackling homelessness, we are pleased that it places prevention work on a firmer statutory footing. In response, the Council has increased funding for the Homeless Service and is proactively working with statutory and voluntary agencies to provide the necessary support to homeless households.

We have therefore increased the staffing levels with the Homeless Service so that the appropriate individual and personalised response can be provided to homeless households. We are also working with a wide range of partners from the statutory, private and third-party sectors in order to provide settled housing and diverse sources of advice and support, including Shelter and Homeless Link who are both National Charity Organisations for homeless people.

The capacity of the social rented sector to meet housing needs of Havering residents will continue to be tested in the years ahead as demand outweighs supply. However, we are committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing through the regeneration programme in order to meet the growing demand.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that he met regularly with stakeholders to support homeless projects. The proposed development mentioned by Councillor Matthews had not yet applied for planning permission. The development would be subject to consultation with local residents and a decision taken in due course by the Regulatory Services Committee.

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New Dwellings in South End Road, Hornchurch

15) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Damian White) **From Councillor Reg Whitney**

Would the Cabinet Member confirm the date of completion for all the new dwellings on the former Sheltered Housing site along South End Road, Hornchurch?

Answer

The site in question, known as Albyns Close, is a development comprising 19 units of which 10 were rented and 9 were shared ownership specifically for older people and was partly funded by GLA grant. The scheme was completed on site in December 2016. As a consequence of the different funding streams, the drawing up of the leases for the shared ownership properties had to be bespoke and there has been a delay in these being finalised. I have asked the Director of Neighbourhoods to look into this and to establish processes ensuring these types of situations do not happen again.

Of the 9 properties for shared ownership

4 are occupied

3 are sold and nearing occupation

2 are sold subject to contract

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that he was proud of the Administration's record of delivering affordable housing and that the Council now had one of the most ambitious regeneration and building programmes in the UK. The Cabinet Member had met with officers to amend processes. Apologies had been given to any residents who had expressed interest in properties and had their contract frustrated. Any organisational failings by the Council had now been rectified.