

Leader's statement to Full Council – Wednesday 23 May 2018

Mr. Mayor

I would like to start by adding my congratulations to you as our newly elected Mayor and to your choice of Mayoress – I know that Nisha (Cllr Patel) and you will uphold the highest standards within public office, and be a continued ambassador for our Borough.

Also, I would like to congratulate the Deputy Mayor and his consort. I very much hope that all of you enjoy your respective times in Office and continue to promote Havering across the area.

Mr Mayor, it is my honour and privilege to be elected as Leader of Havering Council – like all councillors here – I passionately believe that the communities that comprise the London Borough of Havering are the some of the best in the Country and I am in proud to lead them.

I would also like to pay a personal tribute towards Cllr Roger Ramsey for his guidance and support throughout his time as Leader as well as the lasting legacy that he has left for future generations to enjoy. Surely, no one else has had such an impact upon the daily life of our Council and I grateful that he has agreed to remain within the cabinet, providing the oversight of the financial and property portfolio.

I must also thank Andrew Rosindell M.P. someone who has helped me grow and develop me as an elected councillor – taking me under his wing when I joined the Conservative Party and supporting throughout that time.

On behalf of the Council, I would also like to thank all of the staff who ran our 72 polling stations across the Borough, open from 7am right through to the close at 10pm, as well as those who were at the count, firstly to validate the number of votes and then count them.

I would like to congratulate all those who were elected as councillors on the night, welcoming those that are newly elected Councillors for their first term. I very much hope that we will be able to create a welcoming environment for the next four years.

With my cabinet now in place, we will be working towards a truly transformational programme, that will see the latest management technics and technology employed to deliver ever improving public services for our residents.

The largest challenge faced by our Council will be balancing the budgetary pressures of our authority over the coming years, in light of the continued reduction of the Revenue Support grant.

As part of this, I intend to bring forward a financial report to cabinet, seeking to start a period of consultation and discussions with our local residents; seeking their views on how we might balance the revenue budget over the life of this administration.

As part of this consultation, I will be seeking views of other Group Leaders to try to establish common ground as we embark upon this difficult challenge.

A series of briefings will be arranged for Councillors to be informed of the financial situation of the Council and possible areas of consideration of savings. It will also give Officers the chance to discuss and go into greater depth about our transformational agenda, which - I know - will contribute towards the £36 million projected savings required.

Throughout the local elections, I was left with a number of impressions of areas that I felt were important to local residents, ranging from parking to Council Tax levels and how best our authority might continue to develop and evolve, whilst protecting the unique character of our Borough.

As some Members may be aware, Ipsos Mori, the public affairs company, conducted a report into the attitudes of our residents towards Havering Council and its key performance indicators.

This has provided very interesting reading and gives a more empirical set of evidence to help to shape the priorities of the Council over the coming years.

To support all Members, I have requested that an all members briefing be arranged to go through the results of this residents survey with all councillors, with comparisons included against other similar authorities, as to provide a context for the views of residents.

It may come as no surprised that condition of our road and pavement network came top, along with the sense of value for money that residents feel that they derive from our Council.

Residents have told us that a key priority for them is investment in our roads, and so, I will be bringing forward a report to Cabinet that will make the capital investments within our road network a priority for this Administration.

Mr Mayor, to maintain the provision of vital public services, without the salami slicing that other authorities have adopted, I wish to continue to build upon the excellent work of Cllr Roger Ramsey during his time in office in driving a new change agenda throughout our Council – with greater shared working with other public bodies – to create a more streamlined provision of public services.

This new transformational agenda will be crucial in helping to reshape our Council to improve the sense of value-for-money

enjoyed by our residents and I very much hope to bring forward a report to cabinet on this in the autumn.

I believe that this will help shape the type of change agenda that our Council undertakes as well as key priorities that this administration adopts for the years ahead.

Police Issues:

Mr Mayor, I am sure that we are all aware of the murder of Rosina Coleman last week, with a man having already been arrested and charged.

Whilst this forms an active police investigation, I would wish to offer - on behalf of all Councillors - our sincerest condolences to Rosina Coleman's friends and family and support to them at this difficult time.

I very much hope that this proves to be an isolated incident, however upsetting.

I would like for this Council to take every opportunity to support our local police force in providing frontline, community policing, and I will be holding a meeting with the local police commander to see how we might in support them in their mission to keep us safe.

As part of that, I wish to report that progress is being made at acquiring the Hornchurch Police Station for Havering Council to enable a continued presence for the Police within Hornchurch. This would be in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, allowing this vital centre to stay open. Whilst nothing has been signed, I very much hope to be able to update Members at the next full Council.

Royal issues:

As I am sure that many Members have already seen, we have once again commemorated our royal connection in floral form with the Royal Crowns being installed – outside the Town Hall and across the Borough. This is both a fitting tribute towards the recent royal wedding of Harry and Megan – as well as a visit that is soon to take place from His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent to official open the Sapphire Ice and Leisure Centre. The much-gained publicity from this will help to promote Romford and Havering as a key part of the wider community.

Mr Mayor, we want local people to have easy access to services in their local areas, and as part of this, we will be exploring a more community focussed model looking at a community hub approach for how we deliver services in the

future. This is both for Council provided services, but also ones with our partners such as Health for improved care paths for residents.

A key issue for local Havering residents is the lack of affordable housing. Over the last year, the Council has entered into three joint-venture partnerships which will see thousands of new homes built in Romford and Beam Park, and a replacement of the borough's housing stock. Our expectation is that over 35% of all these high-quality new homes will be affordable, allowing local families to get a foot on the housing ladder and to stay in the borough.

I'm pleased to say that the estate regeneration programme with our joint-venture partner Wates Residential is progressing well with the first planning application due to be submitted in November. This Joint venture is expected to double the amount of affordable homes for local families and provide the type of regeneration that is needed across our Borough.

However, regeneration isn't just about Romford or Beam Park. We will actively exploring other regeneration opportunities on sites across the borough to deliver more affordable homes for local families, as well as the right kind of accommodation for our most vulnerable residents. Through our regeneration programme I am pleased to say that we will be developing specialist accommodation for older people including extracare provision, as well as for those with disabilities, such as Autism. Our vulnerable and older residents remain a priority for this administration and I very much hope to be able to continue to keep Members updated as projects progress.

There has been a lot of discussion locally about regeneration and the worries of building new housing without the supporting infrastructure. I share this concern and can absolutely guarantee that officers working on regeneration will focus on providing the key infrastructure to support new homes as well

as for those already living in Havering. We will ensure new schools and health facilities are provided and work to provide new leisure and recreation facilities, building on the undoubted success of Sapphire Ice and Leisure in Romford. We will also pursue the provision of broadband connections across the whole borough for residential and business use.

Transport infrastructure is also a key requirement and we will continue to focus on the development of the feasibility work for a new north-south transport link in Havering linking our key town centres together.

We know that local people have been frustrated for a long time about half-built buildings in the centre of Romford, which have become an eyesore. We will work with landowners and developers to find a solution to these problems and where necessary use our powers to intervene. And I very much hope to be able to bring forward a report to Cabinet on such stalled sites as soon as possible.

Investment in Romford's historic market is central to our heritage and will be a key part of the emerging Romford development masterplan. During the transition to the creation of a number of new homes within the ring-road, which will bring with it a new wave of economically active individuals, it is my intention to provide continued support to the market through a series of events aimed at assisting and supporting traders to provide a first class experience.

Mr Mayor, once again I would like to reiterate that it is my honour to be elected Leader of the Council and I look forward to working with all residents and Members in bringing forward the next chapter for our Borough.

Thank you.