

Leader's statement

Mr Mayor,

I would like to take this opportunity to update the Council on some matters of importance to our community.

As some colleagues may have heard that over the last week there have been five knife-related incidents in the borough, which is deeply concerning for us all. I would like to take this occasion to remember the victims and families of those affected by these crimes, my thoughts are with them.

These incidents reach the core of our local communities, and we are absolutely committed to taking action and reducing the impact of serious youth violence in the borough.

A multi-agency group, including the Council and its partners, has been meeting over the summer to consider a joined-up approach to tackle this issue. A range of summer activities were co-ordinated to engage with young people and seek their views on what would make a difference. Further research is taking place to ensure any proposed solution is effective and based on evidence.

However, the factors that contribute to this rise in violent offending are extremely complex, and there is no simple solution.

The multi-agency group is drawing up an integrated response to this very serious issue, in order to offer targeted support to those young people who are most vulnerable of being affected, either as a victim or a perpetrator. The Council will do everything it can to mitigate against the impact of serious youth violence, and a business case setting out the proposed interventions will be considered over the coming weeks.

MOPAC

In light of that, colleagues may be interested to learn that after refusing to accept the London Mayor's Office for Police and Crime decision to close police access points in the south of the borough, the Council has successfully negotiated an agreement to acquire Hornchurch Police station.

Only by being willing to tackle the Mayor's plans to reduce operational bases within Havering, through the launch of a judicial review, were we able to negotiate an option on the site.

Residents have told us that they want to see more police officers on the streets in their neighbourhoods, and by stepping in and refusing to accept MOPAC's short-sighted decision, the Council has secured the future of the police station in Hornchurch.

The outcome of the original MOPAC decision would have meant residents in this part of Havering having to travel over an hour to their nearest police station, which would have been simply unacceptable. The result of our careful negotiations means we have protected a vital service and intend to enhance this overtime.

We are obviously continuing to work with the police to improve safety in the borough and I have requested that an all member briefing be arranged to update colleagues on this, and the Council's wider approach to supporting policing here, within Havering.

Budget Consultation

Mr Mayor, after launching in July, we are continuing to get the views of our residents for our Budget Consultation – seeking the widest possible variety of opinions before the cabinet come together to recommend a budget strategy.

We have four more consultation events taking place this month – in Collier Row, Hornchurch, Romford and Upminster. We invite residents to join myself, the Deputy Leader, Councillor Robert Benham, along with Andrew Blake-Herbert and Jane West to find out more about the proposals put forward in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to ask any questions.

Without remedial action, the Council will be faced with a cumulative budget gap of more than £37 million over the next four years and I am determined that the Council will set a balanced budget for the next financial year and have a strategy in place for dealing with the gap that our Medium Term Financial Strategy has identified. We must ensure that every effort is taken to lessen the burden of the savings upon our residents, and so, I will be meeting with all three of Havering's Members of Parliament, to see if we are able to put your case directly to Ministers for additional support for our Borough.

Feedback from residents and businesses is fundamental for us in shaping how we tackle the challenges that we face as a Council and where we can focus the budget to offer value-for-money services that meet the needs and demands of our residents.

The findings of the consultation will be included in a paper that will be presented to the Cabinet at its November meeting, which will also be subjected to an all Members briefing.

Havering Show

Also over recent months, we have had the hottest summer on record. But unfortunately, the weather wasn't so kind on the August Bank Holiday weekend. Mr Mayor, may I offer my warmest congratulations to yourself for being willing to fly the flag for our Borough on the Sunday by escorting a group of dignities around.

Despite the wet and windy conditions, however, many people still braved the rain, determined to have a good time, at the Havering Show. On Bank Holiday Monday, more than 20,000 people attended to mark the show's 40th anniversary.

On behalf of Members, I would like to thank all of the organisers and staff who worked over the long weekend to make it another very successful show, and of course, all of our sponsors and supporters.

GCSEs and A level results

The summer also brought with it another great year of school exam results and I would like to give my congratulations to students across the borough who have again done exceptionally well in their GCSE and A-level results.

Our A-level students received an outstanding 98.6% pass rate, which was slightly above the national average, while our GCSE students received a 72.4 per cent pass rate, with 45 per

cent receiving an outstanding grade seven or above. Six of our students achieved a perfect score of 90 across their eight subjects, so well done to them and everyone staying on in education or taking up apprenticeships and jobs.

Ofsted

The Council's Children's service received some good news from Ofsted, who told us that our work with young people had improved substantially since their last visit in 2016.

They said we had shown this through our innovation, co-production with young people, and vision to deliver the best outcomes for children and families.

The inspectors said the determination of leaders in Havering to strive for improvement and their willingness to learn had been 'pivotal in driving service improvements'. They also commended our social workers for being tenacious in the work that they do with children. So, well done to them.

Ofsted described The Cocoon, our innovative care leavers hub, in Romford Town Centre as 'highly impressive' during their visit. This leads me to say how delighted I was to learn that The Cocoon was last month nominated for an award in the national Children and Young People Now Awards. The centre was developed by children's services, alongside young people, and offers education, health, housing and life skills support for young people in care and leaving care. We're excited to hear the outcome, but will have to wait until November to find out if we have won.

I am sure that we all would like to offer our heart-felt congratulations to the staff in the department. They have delivered a truly remarkable result for our residents, and on behalf of the Council, may I say thank you.

Emergency Services Day flag raising

Last week, it was my honour to be able to pay tribute to our emergency services.

The Council joined the country to mark Emergency Services Day with a flag raising ceremony outside the Town Hall. It is important to highlight the fantastic work of our local partner agencies and as Leader of the Council, I was proud to be able to give recognition to the people who put their lives on the line on a daily basis to keep us all safe.

Remembrance Sunday

Havering will mark Remembrance Sunday on 11th November with services and parades held at war memorials and churches across the borough.

No one plays a greater role in keeping us safe than our Armed Forces and these services will give us a chance to remember these servicemen and women, past and present. We should all be proud to stand as a community to mark this significant occasion each November, which highlights the sacrifices our Armed Forces have made.

To make the event even more poignant this year, the 100th anniversary of the Armistice at the end of the First World War, we will be supporting a campaign called "There But Not There" that will see a large six foot high silhouette of a British soldier from the First World War placed at locations all across the borough, including at the Coronation Gardens war memorial in Romford.

The campaign is designed to commemorate those who died in the First World War, to educate all generations, particularly today's younger generation, born nearly 100 years after the outbreak of WW1, to understand what led to the deaths of 888,246 British and Commonwealth service personnel and to help heal today's veterans who are suffering from the mental and physical wounds of their service by raising substantial funds for charities caring for servicemen and women through sales of miniature versions of these Tommy silhouettes.

We are also proud to be supporting 'Battle's Over – A Nation's Tribute' by lighting a beacon on the green at Havering Atte Bower at 7pm on 11 November. Over a thousand Beacons of Light will be lit across the country symbolising an end to the darkness of war and a return to the light of peace.

Walk of Fame

I was excited to welcome plans to establish an Essex Walk of Fame in Romford. Havering is well known for its talent and diversity and the establishment of the walk of Fame will help attract more visitors to Romford and the wider borough. We will be working closely with the project organisers to ensure that any plans create an inclusive memorable experience for everyone.