



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 12 September 2018

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Overview & Scrutiny Board, 5th July 2018

- 1) **To the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Board (Councillor Darren Wise)**
From Councillor Ray Morgon

Would the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Board advise why he cancelled the meeting of the Board scheduled for July 2018 without good reason?

Answer

As mentioned in my email of 21 June 2018, to which the Member asking this question received, following discussions with the relevant officer there were only key performance indicators on the agenda to discuss. There were no other agenda items and it was felt that there was little point in taking valuable time away from officers and Councillors to discuss KPI's which could easily be circulated by email and any questions raised directly with the officers.

Bearing in mind that the other scrutiny committees were also scheduled to commence around the same time, there would not have been any of their reports or feedback to consider.

It was also thought that member suggestions as to the work programme agenda could be collated by the officer of the committee and circulated before the September meeting. Members could then agree upon a work programme and officers could then go away and present upon at forthcoming meetings. I understand that there were only 2 replies from Councillors on the work programme agenda, one of which was on the financial strategy and a topic group has subsequently been created.

(No supplementary question).

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Ferry Lane, Rainham

- 2) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Please provide an update regarding police/council action to minimise the impact of “drifters” using Ferry Lane, Rainham and confirm whether Veolia offered to fund changes to road layout to help resolve matters

Answer

There is an ongoing programme of work to address this issue.

There have been a number of nights of action to tackle this in the past year. In addition, Police regularly monitor CCTV to identify vehicles involved with this activity.

Over the last twelve months the police have served warning notices on over 90 individuals for involvement in this activity, warning them that they will be prosecuted if they return to the area. None of these vehicles have since come to notice. In addition, there have been 28 prosecutions for a variety of driving related issues. This has resulted in an 85% reduction in these issues according to police statistics. Further night time operations are planned

With regard to Veolia Trust and the alleged offer to fund changes to road layout, we made contact with Veolia on the 22nd of August and they have confirmed that unfortunately this will not be a project they will be able to fund.

A police drone operation took place on the 1st of August to identify vehicles and further disrupt activity. The presence of the drone proved to be a successful tactic. Posters had been put up in the area warning the drifters that they may be on camera. A few did turn up and they spent their time driving around the area to establish where the drone was being flown from.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member felt it would not be appropriate to comment on whether it was preferable for ‘drifting’ to take place in the Ferry Lane area rather than in town centres.

Housing Application Form

**3) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Tele Lawal**

When was the Housing Application Form last revised?

Answer

The housing register application form was last reviewed in June 2016 following changes to the Housing Allocation policy which was implemented from July 2016.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the format of documents such as this would be kept under review. There was also a lot of support already available to people with housing issues.

Parking Appeals and Cancellations

**4) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Clarence Barrett**

Over the last year (2017/18), how many parking appeals were successfully contested and subsequently cancelled as a result of formal or informal challenge?

Answer

Out of the 28,253 challenges and representations that were received in 2017/18, 7,731 were cancelled. This represents a cancellation rate of 27%.

Reasons for cancellation vary but include instances where the driver submits evidence as part of their appeal demonstrating that they had a valid pay & display ticket or visitor voucher at the time of the offence but it may have slipped from their dashboard and therefore not on display. Officers do take a common sense approach and will also cancel PCNs and issue warnings where genuine mistakes are shown to be made such as a driver mistyping licence plate details at the P&D machine. There are also instances where mitigating circumstances - such as medical reasons or a vehicle breaking down - has led to a PCN being cancelled.

The criteria by which officers assess appeals and some useful advice is available on the Council's website.

In terms of London comparator statistics, statistics on all PCN cancellations for the reasons about which Cllr Barrett is asking are not collected in the same way across London so direct comparisons are not possible.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that he was happy to look at specific instances where parking tickets had been issued incorrectly and would ask officers to respond directly to Councillor Barrett on these issues.

Redevelopment of the 12 Estates

**5) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Tony Durdin**

The private partnership redevelopment of 12 Council estates will result in more housing. Please provide figures for the existing and forecast increase in housing numbers on these sites and a break down of the different types of ownership and rented accommodation planned?

Answer

There are currently 846 properties on the 12 council estates. It is not possible to provide precise numbers for the additional housing planned as the forecasts cannot be finalised until planning permission is granted. However, the business plan, as set out in the Cabinet report, states that there will be 2719 new units built over a 15-year period. This number is made up of 794 rented homes and 1925 low cost homes/open market homes. Our aim is to double the amount of affordable housing on the sites.

There will be a mix of housing tenures including social rent and affordable rent, low cost home ownership and open market sales to meet the needs of the Borough.

This is the first such Council Housing Revenue Account/Private Joint Venture in the country and this is a true partnership. Instead of selling off land, the Council is regenerating estates and retaining ownership in the long term as well as continuing to be the owner and manager of the social housing that is provided. This partnership is aimed at increasing the amount of truly affordable homes that are truly affordable for local people, therefore creating a lasting legacy for future generations.

(No supplementary question).

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Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018

**6) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Stephanie Nunn**

In light of the recent amendments to the Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018, would the Cabinet Member confirm what steps are being taken to give secure tenancies to Havering residents who meet the criteria and who are currently in PSL properties?

Answer

The Secure tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act only applies to individuals who are already council or Housing Association tenants.

It means that any victim of domestic violence fleeing their Council or Housing Association accommodation as a result of domestic abuse should be made a secure tenant of alternative council accommodation, or an assured tenant of a housing association property. The Act does not apply to homelessness accommodation provided under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

We have put in place a process to comply with the Act until the relevant policy is amended to reflect the change.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed he would be happy to look at any cases of residents in this situation contacting the Council and not receiving a response, if Councillor Nunn could supply the details.

New Zealand Way, Rainham

**7) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Natasha Summers**

Following the Strategic Planning Committee's approval for outline permission to build on land by New Zealand Way, Rainham will the Executive now follow due process called "appropriation of land for planning purposes", requiring a Public Notice inviting objections to the change to be considered by Cabinet, before any more specific plans are put before the committee to consider?

Answer

The land is currently designated as highways grass verge and the Council will follow any statutory appropriation process that relates to this.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that the site would provide 30 affordable homes for people on the Housing Register and that this was a great achievement of the Council.

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CCTV on Council Housing Estates

8) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman) From Councillor Paul McGear

What is the current annual cost of providing CCTV to the Council's Housing Estates?

Answer

The total annual cost of CCTV is £863k. This includes the cost of staff, the running costs of technical equipment, and ongoing maintenance and repairs.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member agreed that value for money should always be sought for tenants and that the existing review of the CCTV service could also cover value for money.

Landlord Licensing

9) To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud) From Councillor Chris Wilkins

Since the additional Licensing Scheme came into effect on 1st March 2018, how many licenses have been issued?

Answer

Since the 1st March 2018 114 final licences have been issued.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member added that work was ongoing to improve the number of licenses issued. Since the scheme had commenced, 67 financial penalties had been issued, recovering a total of £223,000 and 8 notices had been served to landlords.

Use of Letting Agencies

10) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman) From Councillor Jan Sargent

The Council Leader has apologised for mishandling the initial review of PSL housing and I welcome that, but how far had contracts been progressed with letting agencies and what are the extra administration costs from using letting agencies to house tenants outside Havering?

Answer

The Council has given a commitment to carry out a review, which is in progress. This will give us up-to-date knowledge of the housing and support needs of every resident.

Contracts have not been progressed with letting agencies and therefore no administration costs have been incurred.

However, the demand for settled accommodation arises not only from existing tenants of temporary accommodation but also new homeless households.

The properties are procured on an individual need basis and are not part of a contractual arrangement.

(No supplementary question).

Private Sector Leasing

11) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan

Would the Leader of the Council set out in detail the business case for the proposed discontinuance of PSLs and why this has not previously been set out in a Cabinet report or Executive Decision?

Answer

The details of the PSL review were outlined in the All Member Briefing, which took place on 15 August 2018. There is an options appraisal currently underway to address the increase in housing demand in the borough, of which, PSL is only one part of our current supply. The Council is looking at a range of options to tackle increased homelessness and reduce the ongoing budgetary pressures created by housing demand. The outcome of the review will be reported to Cabinet with recommendations for sustainable longer-term housing solutions for our residents.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader of the Council added that an all Member briefing had been held on this subject. The Leader had apologised for the initial handling of this matter by the Council but a review of PSLs was definitely needed.

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Romford Leisure Centre and Morrison's Supermarket

12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor David Durant

The Strategic Planning meeting approved plans for a new Romford leisure centre in Western Road and a Morrisons supermarket, petrol station and 71 houses/flats on the old ice rink site i.e. the "asset swap"!

The leisure centre has been built, but Morrisons abandoned their own plans and now the site has planning approval for 620 flats. This planning approval increases the value of the asset swapped for the leisure centre because at an estimated average value of £200,000 x 620 flats = £124 million. Please confirm how much Morrisons paid towards the leisure centre and the estimated new value of the Council asset swapped and will the Council seek to claw back any lost profit from the swap?

Answer

Morrisons provided the Council with a new town centre site for the Sapphire Ice & Leisure Centre and in addition contributed a further £22m. The new Leisure Centre is now open and is proving to be a wonderful facility for the residents of Havering.

The Council has no further involvement with Morrisons and the old site, other than when it was openly marketed and sold by the Company it is known that this was at a very substantial loss on what it paid to the Council, not a profit. Indeed, the Council received substantially more from Morrisons than the value of the site and received a replacement site as well.

The question refers to suggested values, so I should make clear that the land value of the old Ice Rink site is not £124m, nor has any sale of the land resulted in any such figure.

(No supplementary question).

Briar Road Housing Development

**13) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Keith Darvill**

Will the Cabinet Lead for Housing make a statement about progress in completing the current Briar Road, Harold Hill affordable homes development?

Answer

The Briar Road project is a new-build development delivering 10 two and three bedroom houses for shared ownership, 36 one and two bedroom flats for affordable rent and two commercial shop units.

Work commenced in June 2017 with handover planned in two stages. The first stage is complete with the 10 Shared ownership houses handed over on 25 June 2018. The remaining flats are due to be completed and handed over by 12 April 2019.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he would write to Councillor Darvill with details of the commercial units at the development. The Cabinet Member was excited about the scheme which would be advertised in At The Heart Magazine.

Havering Emergency Assistance Scheme

**14) To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property (Councillor Roger Ramsey)
From Councillor Gillian Ford**

Would the Cabinet Member set out how many applications were made to the Havering Emergency Assistance Scheme in each of the last three years?

Answer

Emergency Assistance Scheme Applications			
Year	Successful	Unsuccessful	Total
2013/14	630	409	1039
2014/15	300	376	676
2015/16	182	434	616
2016/17	157	354	511
2017/18	153	209	362
2018/19	19	57	76 (end July)

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In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member stated that people were told about the scheme if they were referred to voluntary agencies. The scheme was not intended to be a means of ongoing support and applicants had to meet a number of eligibility criteria. The Cabinet Member was happy to look at other ways of making the scheme more well known.

Public Space Protection Orders around Schools

15) To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)

From Councillor Reg Whitney

Given that the Council courted national publicity in relation to Public Space Protection Orders around schools, would the Cabinet Member explain why so few have actually been implemented?

Answer

The pilot PSPO programme launched successfully last year at four primary schools in Havering – Wykeham (now Harrow Lodge), Parsonage Farm, James Oglethorpe and Engayne.

These four schools were selected to be included in the pilot programme as all had reported issues with poor parental behaviour with regards to parking locally at the school, which compromised the safety of pupils.

Since the programme launched, all the schools have fed back positive results in terms of improved road safety in the immediate vicinity of the school.

The programme is currently being evaluated before any decision is taken to roll out the programme to further schools. The main consideration is the cost of the schemes and whether it is financially viable to implement a PSPO scheme as part of a school expansion programme, where pupil safety is raised as a concern, and who should meet the cost of implementation.

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that an extension of the scheme to other primary schools was currently being considered. The decision on extending the scheme would be based on safety as the first priority but any further scheme would also have to be financially viable in order for it to be implemented.