



FULL COUNCIL, Wednesday 23 January 2019

Appendix 2

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Homelessness Strategy in the Borough

1) **To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)**
From Councillor Paul Middleton

Given the growing number of people in Havering who are either homeless, rough sleeping or begging, would the Cabinet Member confirm the steps being taken by this Council to deal with these issues and that the full powers available to the Council and other agencies are being used to deal with these growing problems.

Answer

Along with 40 staff volunteers from the Council both Cllr Persaud and I attended the rough sleeper count that took place on 29 November 2018, targeting known hotspots around the borough. Two rough sleepers were found on the streets that night but 10 are more widely known to the Council. This is a significant reduction from the 22 encountered during the previous year's count.

This is a positive sign that the Council's proactive approach in working with key partners to tackle rough sleeping is having a positive effect. We recognise that the count is a snapshot in time and also carry out a bi-monthly count based on local intelligence gathered from local police teams in all 18 wards targeted at rough sleeping hotspots.

With regards to begging, some of those who are begging are not homeless and the council and police use all available powers. The main powers available are contained within the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014.

A communications campaign is under way to raise awareness of how the Council is helping rough sleepers and to encourage residents who would like to help to give directly to the charities and organisations who provide services to homeless people.

A supplementary question asked if the number of deaths of rough sleepers in the last year could have been reduced if there was a larger Council team working on this issue. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that the new Director of Housing was putting in a new structure to assist work with the homeless and that the Council had a very good homelessness lead.

Special Responsibility Allowances

2) **To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)**
From Councillor Jeffrey Tucker

Following the creation of new committees with SRAs the Executive decided to fund them from within the SRA budget rather than add to the overall amount. This

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involved reducing the SRAs of opposition group leaders by 50% to pay for the newly created SRAs. The Council Leader has special responsibility for Executive decisions, but can Cllr White confirm whether this was his idea or was he solely acting on advice?

Answer

As the report to Council in May last year explained, the changes to the Member Allowances Scheme sought to reflect both governance changes to the planning regime and the results of the local council elections which increased the number of groups on council. The outcome would have been an increase in the number of SRAs awarded and more money spent on allowances. Options were therefore explored to avoid that outcome, some of which were detailed in that same report.

Ultimately it was Full Council's decision to make changes to the allowances scheme, which I might add, included the rejection of a suggestion by an opposition group to keep opposition group leader allowances at the same level despite the increase in the number of groups.

A supplementary question asked whose idea was the reduction in SRAs of opposition group leaders and if the Leader felt it was fair for opposition group leaders to be victimised for being loyal to residents. In response, the Leader of the Council emphasised that the changes to SRA levels were his decision.

Penalty Charge Notices issued in the Borough

**3) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor John Tyler**

Of the 120,713 Penalty Charge Notices issued in 2017/18, would the Cabinet Member give a split between how many were issued at a higher level (£130) and how many at the lower level (£110)?

Answer

The London Borough of Havering issued 120,713 PCN's in 2017/18.

Higher level PCN's – 101,396

Lower level PCN's – 19,317

A supplementary question queried the use of staff resources to undertake a borough wide survey on the Council's parking strategy and the use of the higher PCN banding. In response, the Cabinet Member stated the issuing of more high band PCNs did improve safety and this had been evidenced by a deterrent factor shown in the lower increase in the issuing of higher band PCNs, compared to the lower band.

Number of Rough Sleepers in the Borough

4) **To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)**
From Councillor Carole Beth

How many rough sleepers are currently sleeping outside in Havering?

Answer

As previously answered, along with 40 staff volunteers from the Council, both Cllr Persaud and I attended the rough sleeper count that took place on 29 November 2018, targeting known hotspots around the borough. Two rough sleepers were found on the streets that night but 10 are more widely known to the Council. This is a significant reduction from the 22 encountered during the previous year's count.

This is a positive sign that the Council's proactive approach in working with key partners to tackle rough sleeping is having a positive effect. We recognise that the count is a snapshot in time and also carry out a bi-monthly count based on local intelligence gathered from local police teams in all 18 wards targeted at rough sleeping hotspots.

We encourage residents to report rough sleepers to help the council to locate and give them the necessary support. This can be done by calling the Council on 01708 431180 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. Outside these hours please call 01708 433999. Alternatively, this can be done on the council's website or via the StreetLink app.

A supplementary question queried the accuracy of the numbers of rough sleepers identified. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that this was the official Council count but bi-monthly counts of the homeless population were also carried out. Homelessness was one of the top priorities of the Council.

Policing and Community Safety

5) **To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)**
From Councillor Martin Goode

What are the Council's initiatives and objectives for working more closely with the Metropolitan Police force, Local Safety Neighbourhood Police teams and Park Security officers to encourage a more consistent and proactive approach in dealing with the rising issue of street crime in our Borough? In particular to engage more closely with the local Schools and Youth Education Centres to possibly identify and discourage high risk young individuals that may be currently involved or coerced into being involved with such groups who are committing or the victims of such crimes within our Borough.

Answer

The 3 year Havering Community Safety Partnership Plan was agreed by Full Council on 12th July 2017. The plan sets out the Council and Police priorities for addressing crime and disorder and includes Serious Youth Violence as a priority.

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The recent Annual Strategic Assessment 2018 found that Havering remains the 8th safest Borough in London.

A Strategic Serious Youth Violence group has been established, chaired by the Director of Children's services and a refreshed serious violence and knife crime action plan is due to go to cabinet shortly.

A monthly serious youth violence panel meets to case manage those individuals who come to notice for violence, knife crime or are affected by gangs. This is attended by a wide range of partner agencies including schools and colleges, safer school officers.

A range of projects are currently being delivered through schools and colleges which include:

- Street Doctors
- No knives in schools
- Junior Citizen scheme
- You and Me Counselling

A mentoring programme is funded by the Mayor of London Crime Prevention fund locally for young people who are gang affected. 44 young people have been supported by the scheme with 86% not reoffending within 6 months.

A victim's worker is based in the youth offending service to support young victims of crime.

A supplementary question asked if the Cabinet Member would arrange an all Member briefing on these issues to which the Cabinet Member agreed.

Leases in Council Owned Properties

**6) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Barry Mugglestone**

Would the Leader of the Council confirm that all Council owned properties that are occupied by third parties all have current and up to date leases in place?

Answer

I will respond to the Councillor in writing due to the commercial sensitivity of the information.

(No supplementary question).

Staffing in Democratic Services

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

The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Administration, has revised the structure of Democratic Services by creating 3 new Cabinet support positions at a cost of £160,000. If, due to the day job, the 7 Cabinet Members need further assistance answering emails then the £160,000 should be found within the

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existing SRAs paid to Cabinet Members which now stands at a combined £220,368 per annum. Does the Council Leader agree?

Answer

No, I would not agree. As Members are all too aware, the budgetary challenge for Havering is significant over the next four years. The Council has developed a major change and transformation programme which will deliver a more efficient Council to provide services which are valued, relevant and which balances cost with quality and meets community and individual needs.

Responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the programme and vision rests with the Executive. Revised internal governance arrangements are being introduced to provide the means to achieve this. Officers have assessed the adequacy of current departmental arrangements and have delivered an alternative structure to provide assistance to Cabinet Members in support of their role. This will enable Cabinet colleagues to make more effective use of their time to ensure we are delivering for our residents and I have made clear to Cabinet colleagues the expectations I have of them in ensuring they do just that. It is of course for officers to determine the allocation of resources working within the budgets set by this Council.

A supplementary question asked if these were party political posts, stating that an employment agency used employed a Cabinet member and that one of the post holders was known to a Cabinet member. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that he did not agree that these were party political posts and that the correct recruitment process had been followed throughout.

Residents in PSL Properties

8) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman) From Councillor Clarence Barrett

Further to the pledge made in July 2018 to reassess all 878 people living in Private Sector Leasing (PSL) properties, how many of those residents have since been placed in out of borough accommodation?

Answer

The review process that has been carried out is not about savings but about supporting people. No one has been moved as a direct result of the reassessment process.

As part of normal service delivery, two PSL residents were moved to out of borough PSL accommodation. The first resident was moved because the landlord served notice on the Council to terminate the lease in line with the terms of the lease agreement. The second resident was moved due to risk of domestic abuse from their PSL accommodation.

Both residents' housing rights are not affected as they were moved into other PSL properties and the council continues to owe them a housing duty.

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A supplementary question asked if all 878 people in PSL properties had now received a visit from a housing officer. The Cabinet Member responded that he would bring forward an update to Members on this issue in due course.

Maintenance of Lifts in High Rise Flats

**9) To the Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Joshua Chapman)
From Councillor Denis O'Flynn**

In light of frequent complaints from residents in high rise flats relating to lifts not working will the Lead Member inform me as to the level of preventive maintenance carried out to reduce the number of reported lift breakdowns?

Answer

A lift replacement programme has been included in the HRA budget for 2019/20 which will enable a rolling replacement of all lifts throughout the borough's housing stock.

In order to help reduce the likelihood of lift breakdowns, we use a specialist Lift Company, Express Lift Alliance group (ELA), to undertake all maintenance and servicing of the passenger lifts in our Housing stock. The contractor is robustly managed by the Building services and Compliance team who hold regular contract meetings with ELA, where contractor performance is reviewed, improvement actions identified and plans put in place.

Part of the service provided by ELA is to undertake regular monthly planned and preventative maintenance inspections of our passenger lifts. These inspections are undertaken with a view to proactively identifying and rectifying potential maintenance problems or health and safety issues and to undertake routine maintenance, all of which will help reduce the likelihood of the lifts breaking down.

In addition, there is also an independent annual inspection undertaken on each of our passenger lifts by our insurers Zurich, to ensure their safety and also identify any maintenance issues they consider need addressing using a risk based reporting approach.

A supplementary question asked for assurances that the company would supply skilled people to carry out lift repair jobs and whether Councillors could attend discussions re the tendering of the contract. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that most lift problems were responded to within a four hour call-out but repairs could take longer if for example parts were awaited. The Council did however have fully compliant processes in place.

Grass Verges

**10) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Darren Wise**

With the onset of Winter and the continuing issue of vehicles driving over grass verges and churning these up, could the Administration advise what actions they are taking to eradicate this and whether there are plans to restore them or install bollards especially as it is a problem in Harold Hill?

Answer

Complaints of damage to grass verges caused by vehicles are referred to the Council's Environment Services for investigation and where sufficient evidence can be gathered, offending vehicle owners are identified and can be pursued for enforcement action under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Alternatively, where reports indicate that damage is being caused by contravention of parking regulations, Civil Enforcement Officers can be deployed to issue a PCN (Penalty Charge Notice) if a vehicle is observed parked on a grass verge or pavement.

Reinstatement of grass verges is considered but in the first instance if the evidence clearly suggests a local resident/ business is at fault the Council would encourage them to apply for a vehicle cross-over where appropriate. For persistent problems the use of bollards on a case by case basis could be investigated alongside other options, but are not always appropriate.

A supplementary question stated that Councillor Wise would write to the Cabinet Member re specific grass verge cases and the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate these.

Enforcement on Gardens

**11) To the Cabinet Member for Environment (Councillor Osman Dervish)
From Councillor Ray Morgon**

In order to "Keep Havering Special" Would the Cabinet Member introduce a policy with appropriate powers to ensure that front and rear gardens are kept tidy by residents.

Answer

The Council already has powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, to deal with an accumulation of waste and hazardous gardens. Where complaints are received the Council will investigate and where necessary appropriate action will be taken including enforcement.

A policy is already in place for housing tenants and it is enforced through tenancy agreements which stipulate that gardens be 'well maintained at all times'.

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A supplementary question asked why there were delays in taking action that often still did not solve problems. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that each case had to be looked at individually. Action would be taken but the appropriate legal process had to be followed.

Costs of Development, Dovers Green

**12) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Graham Williamson**

The planning committee by 7 to 1 approved a stopping up order regarding Dovers Green, off New Zealand Way. Residents intend to strongly object to the stopping up order in favour of keeping the Green as a high value green open space. In this situation the Mayor of London can instruct the Council to hold a local enquiry to determine the matter.

How much has it cost the Council so far to progress plans to build on the Green, including the Village Green Public Enquiry, and how much more are the Executive prepared to pay contesting a new local enquiry into the future of the Green?

Answer

The proposed development at New Zealand Way consists of 30 new dwellings and comprises a mix of 2- bedroom and 3- bedroom houses.

The cost to the Council, both as developer and regulator, to progress plans to build the new houses on the proposed site at New Zealand Way was £116,581.52 and the breakdown is as follows:

- Pre-development fees are £87,855.45. The cost covered all the surveys, planning application fees and other professional fees;
- Cost incurred to defend the community led application for Village Green status £19,800;
- Costs already incurred for legal advice received on “stopping up and Appropriation” was £8,926.07.

The costs of bringing this site forward are normal for any developer or land owner wishing to bring forward a new scheme of this nature and size.

The scheme produces 30 units of much needed affordable family housing for local people.

A supplementary question asked if people would believe the Administration’s priority to ‘Keep Havering Special’ if the Green had been saved. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that the land would deliver 30 units of affordable housing for vulnerable people. It was important to provide quality homes to vulnerable residents and this showed the Council cared about homelessness and associated issues. The Leader added that he was proud that the project had been brought forward.

Licences and penalties issued to Landlords of HMO's

13) To the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Safety (Councillor Viddy Persaud)

From Councillor Chris Wilkins

It was recently reported that penalties to the value of £304,250 had been issued against landlords operating inadequate and dangerous living conditions in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) over the past 11 months. Over that period, how many licences have been issued and how much of the £304,250 has actually been received to date?

Answer

We take this issue extremely seriously with the impact it has on people's lives. Legislation was changed less than a year ago to make it easier to crack down on so called rogue landlords

Since then, based on figures up to the 9th January 2019, the Council issued 164 licenses and a further 32 are currently being processed.

We expect more to be issued as we continue the crackdown.

Additionally, 110 fixed penalty notices have been issued and, to date, 12% of those have been paid. A robust approach will be taken to recover the remainder.

A supplementary question asked why the register of licensed HMOs had not been updated since 5 June 2018. In response, the Cabinet Member agreed to check on this and provide an update to the Councillor.

Future High Street Fund

14) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)

From Councillor Keith Darvill

Will the Leader make a statement about the Council's intention to submit an application to the Future High Street Fund for grant funding to support essential improvements to Havering's High Streets and Retail Centres?

Answer

Supporting the future vitality of the borough's Town Centres is of critical importance to the Council, and central to achieving the ambitions set out in the corporate plan. As such, we are certainly looking at the High Streets Fund as an opportunity to increase the Council's ability to make improvements. The Future High Streets Fund is designed to support transformative capital investments, and officers are looking carefully at the detail of the prospectus with a view to bringing forward a proposal for submission. The prospectus asks for expressions of interest by the 22nd March 2019.

A supplementary question asked if, given the tight timescale, there would be consultation with Councillors and local groups on the development of the vision.

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In response, the leader of the Council stated that he hoped Members across the Council would get involved in the new area action plans. Discussions on these would take place with stakeholders and residents and Councillors would also be able to be involved in the development of the action plans.

Resources to Underpin Future Development in Havering

**15) To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Damian White)
From Councillor Ray Morgon**

Would the Leader of the Council confirm what pledges he has received from other public sector services that operate within Havering that resources will be increased to meet the increased demands placed upon it by the numerous developments in Havering in the next ten to fifteen years?

Answer

Funding for additional community infrastructure such as primary care health facilities or schools is not achieved through pledges.

The growth identified to meet the Borough's future housing needs is contained in the Local Plan and we work closely with a wide range of agencies to ensure their plans and programmes match that growth so our residents can enjoy a high quality of life.

Funding is also obtained from developers to ensure they mitigate the impact of their developments through S106 obligations and our new Community Infrastructure Levy; we continue to work closely with partners such as the GLA, Transport for London and neighbouring local authorities to secure major infrastructure improvements.

A supplementary question asked how emergency services were being made aware of the increased number of developments and residents in Havering over the next 10-15 years. In response, the Leader of the Council stated that the Local Plan had been consulted on with all local bodies and that he was happy to meet with Group Leaders to go through the current Local Plan if they wished.